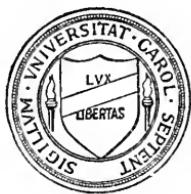


The
BRIDE'S RETURN
OR
How Grand Avenue Church
Came to Christ

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REV. C. A. JENKENS

The Bride's Return

—OR—

How Grand Avenue Church Came to Christ

A STORY WITH A SUPREME PURPOSE

"Come hither, and I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife."
Rev. 21:9.

By C. A. JENKENS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

By Hazel Robinson

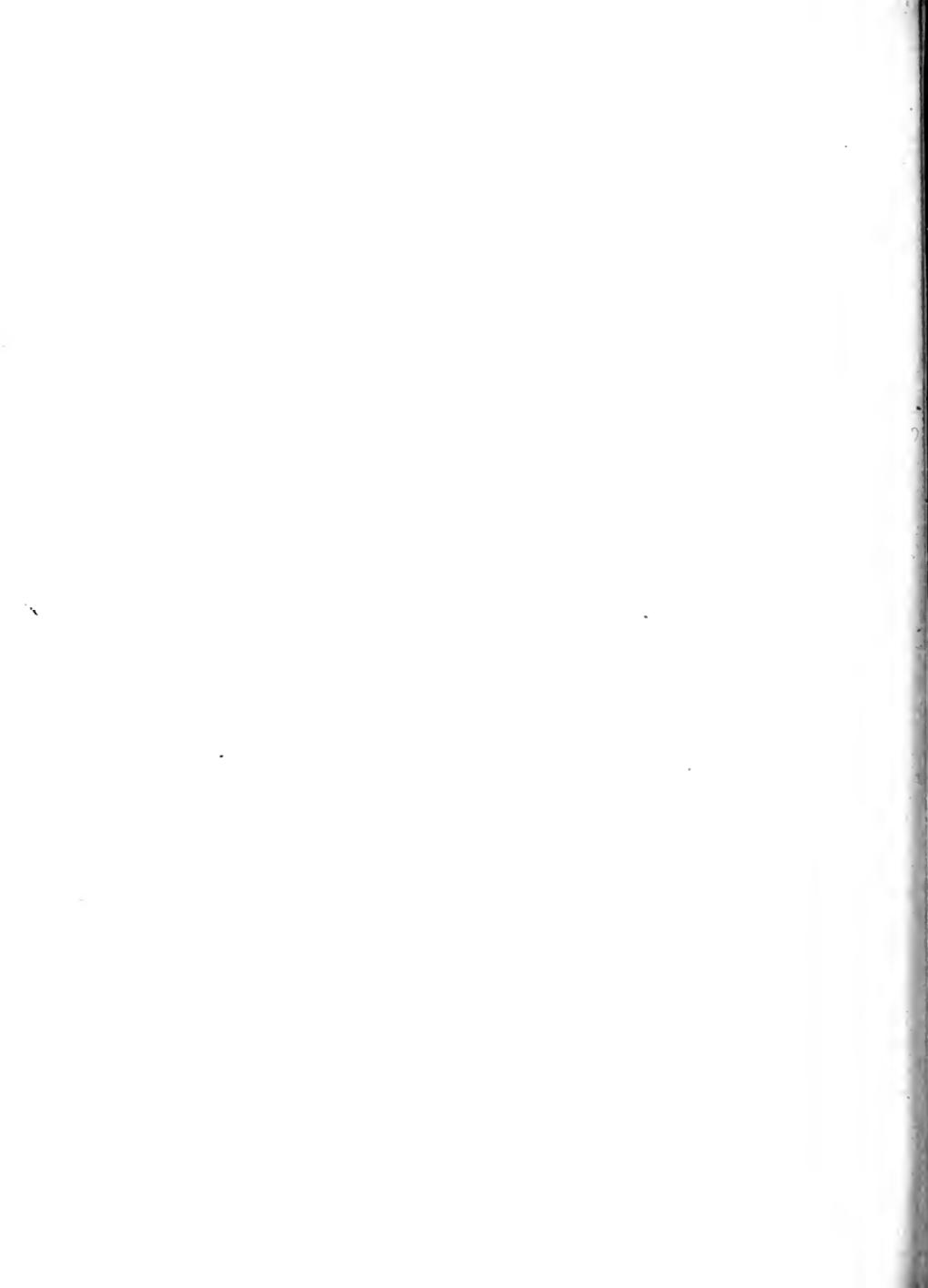
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Charlotte, N. C.

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1911
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TO
LILLIE
MY WIFE
WHOSE DAILY WALK
HAS SO LARGELY EMBODIED THE TRUTH
SET FORTH IN THESE PAGES
THIS STORY IS LOVINGLY
DEDICATED

154498



Yes, that is what **we** are. Not Apostles, but adapters. I knew there was a word somewhere in the language that would exactly express our present spirit and service. We *adapt* the Gospel to the age. We preach to the times. We do not stand back in those eternal truths which belong to all ages, and whose musical thunder should bring into reconciliation every antagonism and discord. Yet we claim to be of the old-fashioned sort. The old-fashioned ministers bore scars for medals; they took honors in the school of suffering; they graduated in the dungeon and in the wilderness, and their breath was like the fresh air that blows round a mountain top. Do I speak to any young man who is about to enter the ministry? Any gentle, delicate, pale, frail creature who is going to take up the Apostolic banner—at least, the silken end of it? It is hard work. You can make it easy if you please; but in so pleasing you offend God. Wherever this Gospel is preached it must create antagonism. We have indeed, by a tacit compact, villainous in its every syllable, agreed to shut up the unpleasant, and to confine the disagreeable, and to hold converse only upon such topics and principles as soothe and comfort us, and assure us of our personal safety. Why, Christianity began as a fighting religion. When did it lay aside its first charter? Christianity came as a fire, as a sword, as a voice of judgment.

Joseph Parker.



PREFACE.

After long and painful consideration, I have come to the unavoidable conclusion that Christianity is disintegrating. It lacks cohesion; for having departed so far from Jesus and his teachings, it has no sufficient bond of union to hold it together. The manly vim, the womanly devotion, the heroic zeal, the unquestioning faith, and the consecration of the early churches, are so rarely met with, as to be deemed practically lost.

Christianity began as a fighting religion: it faced the foe on a thousand battlefields, and vanquished him. The militant hosts of the new religion swung their standard to the breeze, and marched under the personal leadership of the Divine Christ, "who lifted with his pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages." Idols fell from their pedestals, temples crumbled to their bases, and, by the miracle of regeneration, repentant sinners became holy. In striking contrast, churches to-day are too generally following human leaders, who have only a human message for men, and under whose weak, sensational, worldly, and timid ministry, Christendom is becoming both infidel and pagan. Chris-

tians are magnifying trifles and minifying momentous issues. They have introduced machinery to do the work of the Holy Spirit. Excessive organization has divided the congregation, and done a large part in destroying unity and Christian brotherhood. The men of our day are like a novice who looks upon the heavens with the ends of his telescope reversed. He puts the stars farther away from him, and obscures the face of the sky. So many now, notably university professors and metropolitan clergymen, are turning the small end of the telescope upon the spiritual heavens, making the most glorious truths that shine therein insignificant and uncertain, while God himself becomes small, and the Cross and Hell become invisible. John Morley wrote God with a small *g*, which shows how little sceptics are. Not a few in our own land as well are writing Bible with a small *b*, and as a necessary result are belittling the atonement, the new birth, the fall, sin, penalty, service, and holiness.

What will be the outcome of all this? Can a house divided against itself stand? Can any institution be permanent that betrays the basal principles on which it rests? Can the church adopt the world's methods, and live the world's life, without sharing the world's doom? I give the reasons that impel me to make these inquiries. In the great battle between Christianity and the world during the past fifty years, the world has steadily gained, while the church has steadily lost what had hitherto been regarded as its impreg-

nable positions. Among these may be named the following:

1. THE LOSS OF THE BIBLE.

Higher criticism has joined forces with infidelity to discredit the integrity and infallibility of the Scriptures, and as a consequence of the vigorous assault, multitudes in the pulpit and in the pew have surrendered the Bible as an unerring message from God to man. The Book is not the authoritative guide it once was, but has degenerated into a compendium of Jewish history or a book of literature. Thousands of professed believers do not read it, do not believe it, and do not follow it. The world, then, has in a large sense, captured the Bible from the church.

2. THE LOSS OF THE BIBLE GOD.

Naturally, when the Scriptural revelation of the Deity is discarded, there being no other clear revelation of him, men lose sight of the true God, because they have elsewhere no account of him. To great numbers of church-members the Deity has ceased to be a great, loving, present God, leading his children by gracious providences, but an indistinct God, whom they do not know and cannot love. As the enemy has strengthened his firing line, the church has, in an alarming degree, abandoned the God of the Bible.

3. THE LOSS OF THE DIVINE CHRIST.

To the church, Christ is not what he was fifty years ago. Believers exalted him as the omnipotent Jesus, conqueror of death and hell, saving men by the unmeasured efficacy of his blood. No suspicion rested on his atonement, no doubt existed as to his deity. The Word was *God*. But today he is but a man, and even accredited followers have crucified him afresh and put him to an open shame. So, the church is losing its Christ.

4. THE LOSS OF THE SABBATH.

Many thinking persons believe that Christianity must suffer inevitable collapse when Sabbath desecration becomes universal. The Holy Day is now practically lost to millions of men both in and out of the church, and Christianity is staggering and retreating before the world. Montalembert said: "There can be no religion without worship, and no worship without Sunday." Dr. Macleod said: "It is not too much to say that without Sunday the church of Christ could not, as a visible society, exist on earth." If this be true, how earnest every child of grace should be in seeking to restore the Sabbath as a day clearly demarcated and set apart for religious observance. The Sabbath has become the day for games, sport, sleep, and big dinners. It is the chosen day for the display of fine horses, surreys, and auto-

mobiles. It is the time for excursions and travel for trains and trolley cars. Post-offices, express companies, and telegraph lines know no Sabbath. Drug stores, with their cigars and soft drinks, dairy farms, ice plants, and in many parts of the country, the common business of life know no day of worship and rest. And worst of all, not one-fourth of church-members attend the house of God at any one service, unless there be presented some frivolous entertainment or spectacular performance. The world, then, may claim to have wrested the Sabbath from the church.

5. THE LOSS OF MARRIAGE.

The primal institution of marriage, coming down to us from the Garden of Eden, is giving way. Marriage is the basis of the home, and the home is the unit of the state; therefore both the home and civilization are threatened. Easy divorce has subverted the divinely ordained relation of the sexes, and is reducing society to a state of freelovism. The world is snatching wedlock and the home from the keeping of the church, while the shadows grow darker.

6. THE LOSS OF HELL.

Law implies penalty. Law without punishment might be excellent instruction or wholesome advice, but it could not form the basis of govern-

ment. While we exalt the love of God, we must not obliterate his justice. God's love of virtue does not impress me any more than his hatred of vice. The Bible does not make heaven more real than hell. Good and evil are not the same, and they will not be treated the same way in eternity. The prevalent loose view of future punishment is lowering the ideals of men, increasing crime, and destroying the influence of the Bible. The world has captured hell, and lost heaven.

Many Christians have thus surrendered everything in religion worth contending for. It is time for believers to take their bearing. We must have Christ or Satan, Bible or Babel.

To impress these fundamental truths, I have employed the charm of story, marshalling scene and incident, pathos and tragedy, romance and fiction, to arouse Christians to the danger that threatens the cause that seems to be sinking. Something must be done to regain the ground already lost. There is as great need of a reformation to-day as there was in the time of Martin Luther. The church is drifting, and the world has ceased to respect it. Men cannot be saved by beholding two-thirds of the church like themselves, stirred by the same emotions, and leading the same life. The average church-member stands for nothing. Christianity must produce better characters, or the blind will lead the blind till both fall into the ditch. The inexorable law of church life is *Regeneration or Degeneration*.

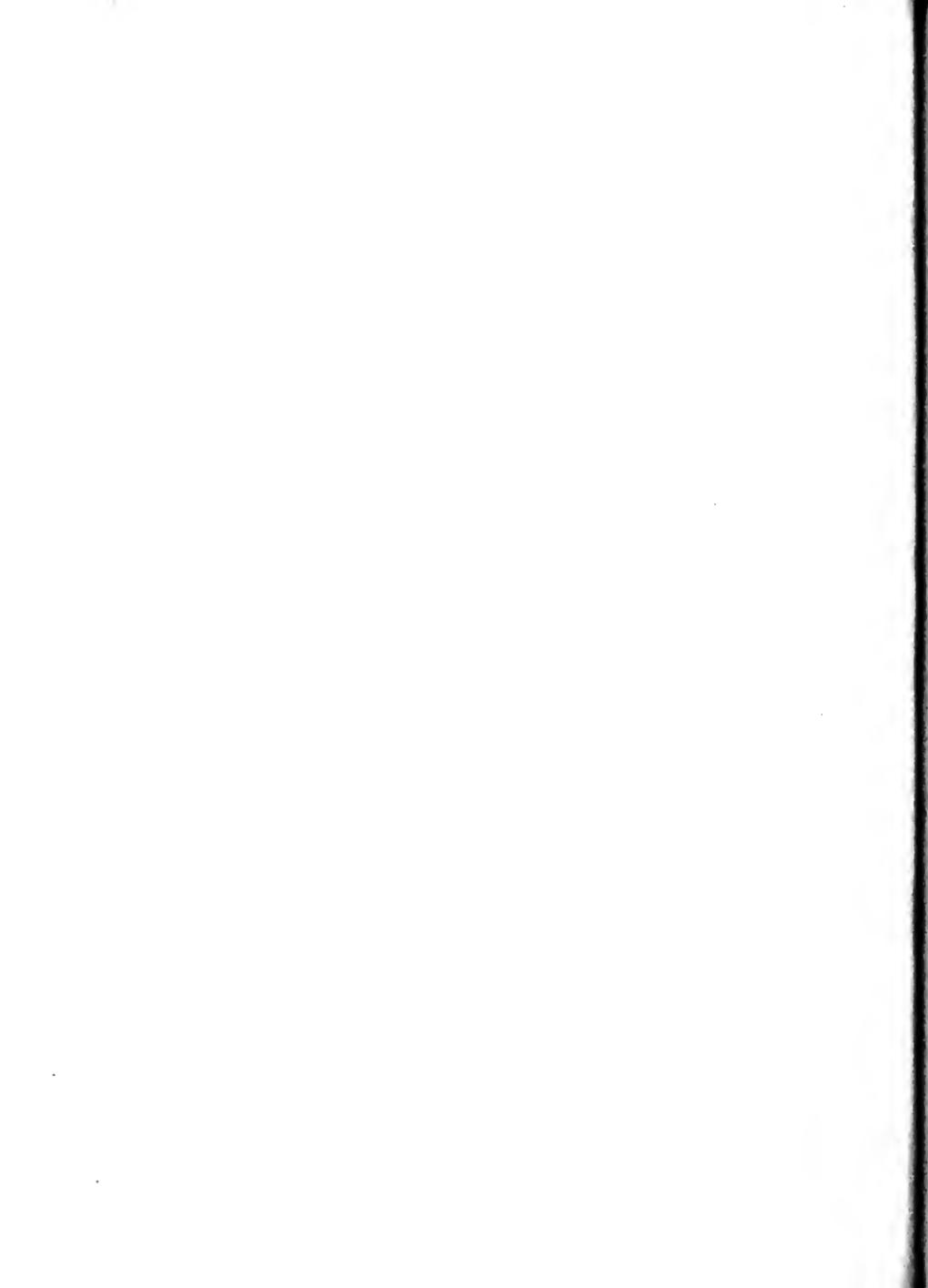
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THE BRIDE'S RETURN.

I.

THE GOSPEL OF ART.

The sermon was popular. The theme was "The Perfection of Art"; and having pronounced the benediction, Dr. Arlington remained a few moments in the pulpit gathering up his notes, so carefully prepared, that they were themselves specimens of art, bestudded with gems of literature gathered from the classic treasures of all tongues. The discourse closed with a heavy gilt-edge of choice verse. The congregation was large and wealthy, and, for the most part, liked this sort of preaching. The minister felt no small satisfaction in the performance of the evening, since he was conscious not only of meeting the expectation of a majority of his auditors, but also of having succeeded, in an unusual degree, in setting forth art, crowned and glorified, as the supreme object of adoration; art, moreover, in rendering the needed service of embalming in sacred rhetoric the names and deeds of the masters.

He mingled complacently with the congregation, sure that he would receive the praise that so studied a sermon should evoke. And herein the minister was not mistaken; for many proclaimed it his best effort. Not a few were heard to say that they would attend church oftener if they could always hear such eloquence; while Mrs. Stuart, the banker's wife, pressed towards the pulpit, a thing she had never done before, to congratulate Dr. Arlington on his superb description of the masterpieces of Phidias, Polyclitus, Angelo, and Rembrandt.

"Don't you think, Doctor," said Mrs. Stuart. "that it would be too lovely for the Ladies' Art Guild to purchase some statuettes of the masters, such as Raphael, Rubens, Correggio, Alma-Tadema, or even Sir Joshua Reynolds, to adorn our pulpit?"

Dr. Arlington: "Madam, you are but predicting what will come to pass in the new age, when art shall ascend the throne; but the time is not yet; the human mind is darkened; man's vision must be clarified; then, as the morning after a long, dark night, shall the resplendent day of art break upon a regenerated world."

Mrs. Stuart: Then, Dr. Arlington, we agree that music, sculpture, painting, culture, and oratory are at last to redeem society?"

Dr. Arlington smiled, as if the keynote of his

theology had been touched, and replied: "Yes; for a thing of beauty is a joy forever, and joy is regeneration."

Mrs. Stuart glided out into the vestibule, and there meeting the church treasurer, informed him that her subscription to the pastor's salary was to be doubled.

The congregation had melted away in the darkness; and Dr. Arlington was slowly wending his way to the parsonage, when a young man stepped up briskly behind him, saluting in a merry voice, "Good evening, Doctor. Allow me to congratulate you on your phenomenal triumph this evening. I do not go to church generally; but seeing your subject advertised in the *Echo*, I resolved to hear you. The theme has always interested me. And it is not flattery to say that it was timely and well put. Your voice and manner were admirably suited to the thoughts presented and the selections rendered. The interpretation of the "Raven" was masterly, the caricature of orthodox religion was perfect. Now, Dr. Arlington," continued Mason Saunders, a rising young lawyer of Woodville, "I wish, as an ardent admirer of yours, to offer first a suggestion and then a criticism, both, I think, in the line of your sermon."

"Both will be appreciated, I assure you;" said the preacher, adding with a bit of facetiousness,

"for holy wedlock exists between law and gospel, and let not man put them asunder."

"Very well," exclaimed Saunders with a half laugh. "The suggestion is this: Suppose you select the evening lesson, for a change, from Shakespeare or Tennyson. How refreshing a selection from *In Memoriam* would be! You might occasionally substitute an excerpt from Milton, though that would be too much like Genesis. Oh! give us a rest from Moses, John, and Paul."

"Indeed," answered Dr. Arlington, "I have often had the same yearning; but there are some feeble lambs in the flock that cannot bear such marked innovations now, though they be in the direct line of progress. Now let's have the criticism, Saunders."

"Well," urged the lawyer, "I think your allusion to the final reign of *Christ* was infelicitous, especially since you had so conclusively demonstrated that the great forces that will rule the new era will be those springing from art. If, then, you had said instead 'the reign of art,' there would not have been a flaw in the discourse. Pardon my candor, Doctor, but we lawyers of necessity must be logical."

"Thank you!" said Arlington. "I shall make that correction the next time I have occasion to deliver the sermon. Good night, Mr. Saunders."

Next morning, as the eloquent divine sat at breakfast, the following letter was laid at his plate:

"DR. JAS R. ARLINGTON:

My dear Sir:— Your sermons have, for some weeks, been attracting unusual and deserved attention, especially the Sunday evening discourses. You know that I belong to a club, and we sports don't take up with the clergy as a rule; but all the boys are stuck on you. Those that were present last evening at the Grand Avenue Church are enthusiastic in your praises, and swear on the high keys that you made an absolute hit—a ten strike—you held both right and left bowers—a winning flush. Now, compliments over, let me extend to you, my good Doctor, on behalf of our committee of arrangements that met last evening in the vestibule of the church after service, a hearty invitation to repeat at the next meeting of the club, Thursday, 8 p. m., your sermon on Art. All the boys say, Come.

Hoping to hear favorably from you,

I remain, as ever, in the gospel of art, yours,

ELI ROBINS.

Chairman of the Card and Gaming Club Committee.

Dr. Arlington accepted the invitation, evidently pleased at the prospect of reaching persons who

do not commonly come within the range of pulpit ministrations.

Mrs. Arlington, from some cause, appeared sad. Her husband's rapidly growing popularity did not awaken that ecstasy in her heart that might have been expected; and when he had retired to his study, she buried her face in a child's garment she was making, and wept.

Dr. Arlington had made some visitations in the afternoon; but seized with an irresistible impulse to see the report of his sermon which he knew would appear in the evening paper, he cut short his pastoral labors, and hastened homeward. The *Echo* contained not only a report of the sermon, but a picture of the preacher. After showing the cut, with the remark that the artist had failed in a measure to give the dreamy expression of the eyes, and to reproduce the deep intellectual cast of the brow, he read aloud:

“THE GOSPEL OF ART.

DR. ARLINGTON THE APOSTLE OF A NEW ERA.

Last evening, the Rev. James R. Arlington, D. D., pastor of the Grand Avenue Church, spoke with tremendous earnestness and power on the “Trend and Triumph of Art.” The congregation, made up of all classes of our citizens, taxed the capacity of the edifice, filling even the galleries and block-

ing the aisles. Many of the societies were out in force, drawn by the magic of a rational theology. The great audience was held spell-bound as the preacher developed the gospel of the new era, illustrating with matchless rhetoric each proposition maintained. He asserted that the true gospel is eternal being, having neither beginning nor end. Being is manifestation, manifestation is art. Art is life, life is duty. The Bible is itself a masterpiece of literary art. The Man of Nazareth is a consummate intellectual creation, and the Christian life a social poem. Dr. Arlington interpreted sin to mean inability to apprehend art; Satan, ignorance; hell, discord; regeneration, intellectual joy; salvation, culture; life, divine harmony; death, darkness; virtue, beauty; heaven, success; Christ, the deity in man; grace, love; and prayer means music. As he gave this last definition, the Doctor, repeated, with amazing effect, the Lord's prayer as a specimen of sacred art, while the organ sounded softly; but the one incomparable hit of the evening was the rendition of the "Raven." This brought down the house, and the preacher was encored to the echo.

The Gospel has a new ring as uttered by Dr. Arlington; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. At all events, his interpretation is a relief to many minds, wearied with the puzzles of an outworn faith; for the old creeds

are dead, and the age demands new expressions of truth. A candle served our fathers, but when the electric lamp blazes, the tallow dip disappears."

Dr. Arlington laid down the paper, and smiled.

CHAPTER II.

HUMAN GODS.

In the next column of the *Echo* was an account of a terrible accident. Eli Robins, Woodville's notorious sport, that very morning after mailing his invitation to Dr. Arlington, had fallen while attempting to board a moving trolley, and was fearfully crushed. He was taken to the Park Hospital, fatally injured. Mrs. Robins bent over the sufferer, asking whether he would like the pastor to call. A flush came to the pallid cheek, a frown contracted the clammy brow, while poor Robins gasped between the paroxysms of his agony, "He preaches art, I need Christ—Oh! these pains!—Hold my head, Nannie—there—ouch! Oh!—I wanted to live by art—ouch!—but I want to die by faith—Ouch! ouch!—my life has been vain and frivolous. I joined the church in my youth, and sometimes, Nannie—ouch!—lift my head a little—sometimes I had spiritual aspirations, but—Oh! these pains—hold me tight, Nannie, I'm shivering—but the doctrine of art quenched them—Let me breathe a moment—Art may do for a gaming club, but it is a poor thing

for a dying bed—Let me rest a bit—Tell the boys, Nannie, that art—Oh! these pains are growing—Ouch!—that art doesn't give any comfort to a dying man—I am sinking, Nannie. The shadows are falling darker; have the physician out. Now; kneel down beside me; put my hand on your head;—let me breathe—now swear by the hope of immortality that you will avenge the loss of my soul, as far as you can, by blighting the ministry of this spiritual murderer—mur-mur-derer! Let me rest—rest; it is getting so dark, Nannie. Now, raise your right hand, dear—that's it! and swear by the everlasting Name that Grand Avenue Church shall know that I die hopeless and my blood crieth unto God from the pulpit."

"I swear it shall be so!" and her hand fell.

Eli Robins, gasping heavily, threw up his arms, huskily groaning, "Lost by art!" and shut his eyes forever on the things of time.

Robins was a well-known character among sporting circles in Woodville, holding extensive interests in brewery stock, and a controlling financial influence in the West End Race-Track; whilst withal he was a member of Grand Avenue Church, in which he rented a pew that he prized as highly as any stock he owned of the same cost. He often expressed his belief that every man ought to have a sitting in a church, because it gave him social position, and increased his revenues from



"Swear that you will avenge the loss of my soul."



church patronage. Then he was a friendly man; and often boasted that he was no respecter of persons, but loved pagans and Christians alike, Ingersoll and his pastor without distinction.

The funeral procession slowly wound its way to the church. It was Thursday afternoon—only four days since the deceased entered the sanctuary to hear art glorified—now Eli Robins and art are both dead. Gloved pall-bearers bore the body to the front, and lowered it before the pulpit. The church was decorated with flowers and flags and bunting. Above the organ hung a life-size portrait of the deceased, surmounted by a crown of ivy leaves resting on a cross of white roses. On either side of the pulpit stood a prize banner; the one on the right bearing this inscription in gilt letters:

PRESENTED TO
ELI ROBINS,

WINNER OF THE WOODVILLE TURF PRIZE.

BY THE

WEST END RACE-TRACK ASSOCIATION.

On the banner at the left were these words:

ELI ROBINS,
CHAMPION WHIST PLAYER,
FROM

THE CARD AND GAMING CLUB.

The fraternities and orders directed the obsequies. At the first soft notes of the organ, the seats reserved for the Whist Club were all taken, and then artistic voices sang "The Switzer's Farewell," after which a special choir chanted Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar." The pastor chose as the basis of his remarks the sixth verse of the eighty-second Psalm: "I have said, Ye are gods."

"My subject," said Dr. Arlington, "is the Deification of Man. The world is peopled with human gods. Any man that perfects any bent of his nature is a deity. Any noble impulse is divine. Every generous aspiration is godlike. Plato, developing his celestial conception of ideas, was a god. Aristotle, delving deep among the very roots of thought, was a god. Savonarola, seeking the regeneration of Italy, was a divinity. Columbus, with sails spread to angry storms, with keel plowing swelling tides, was a human deity. Peter Cooper, establishing schools of art for the redemption of American youth, and Brahma, Zoroaster and Confucius, striving to elevate the masses of humanity, all take their rank with cloud-compelling Jove. Dewey, shattering the war vessels of a proud enemy—chanting in the music of shot and shell the freedom of the oppressed—is a god of battle. So are all good men and women, consecrated to noble achievement, sublime purpose, and holy art, divine. All true

architects, artists, musicians, inventors, discoverers, financiers, philosophers, and statesmen, whether Sir Christopher Wren, Moses, Padewski, Beethoven, Buddha, or Christ—all are divine—all gods in their own way.

“In the life and character of Eli Robins, there were iridescent flashes of this human divinity. He was an all-round character, a many-sided success. He loved art for art’s sake; he mingled with all classes of men, being an embodiment of the divine philosophy—I count nothing strange to me that is human! He was a genius most versatile. At home alike in the splendor and glory of the theatre, or the gentler and humbler service of the church. He could quote intelligently from Paul or Tom Paine—could interpret the gospel of Confucius or Christ with equal skill. He knew nothing of bigotry; but rising above all narrowness, in the vast sweep of his mind he accepted all creeds, bowed before all gods, embraced all joys. And it gives me unfeigned pleasure to announce that the several clubs of which he was a member have set on foot a movement to place a memorial window back of the pulpit as a fitting tribute to one so worthy.

“This sad service will be concluded at the grave.”

And Dr. Arlington headed the procession.
The *Evening Echo* made this statement:

"This afternoon Eli Robins, one of our most respected citizens, honored alike in the city clubs and the Grand Avenue Church for liberality of mind and largeness of heart, was interred in the most beautiful spot of our beautiful Willow Grove Cemetery with impressive ceremonies. Dr. Arlington's funeral elegy was masterful, at times overpowering. His interpretation of 'human gods' was as profound and discriminating as Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, while his spiritual insight was as clear as that shown in the discussions of Anaxagoras. He drew inspiration from Zeno, philosophy from Socrates, morals from Seneca, escatology from Darwin's theory, and salvation from human adjustment to artistic environment.

Without the slightest adulation it may be affirmed, that for brilliant rhetoric, apt quotation, burning pathos, and beauty of diction, the panegyric has never been equalled in Woodville."

In the editorial columns of the same issue of the *Echo*, appeared the following business comment:

"The Eli Robins' estate will pass into the hands of an executor, suit having been brought against it by the Domestic Land and Improvement Company; but it is hoped that his large interests in the Home Brewing Association will be more than sufficient to adjust all claims."

CHAPTER III.

MUSIC IS PRAYER.

Dr. Arlington was sitting by the open Franklin grate in his study one chill morning in November, reading "Quo Vadis," when the servant laid a letter, addressed in a woman's hand, on his secretary.

"Ah me!" sighed the Doctor, taking up the missive; "I suppose I am summoned to visit a sick mother-in-law, or attend a dying pauper, or to conduct a funeral, or, perchance, to give advice about raising children. What do I know about such things? I long for the day when such drudgery shall be done by the nurse, the doctor, the sexton, or the philosopher. This is poor business for the seer, who dwells in the sanctuary of poesy, and divines the glory of the coming age."

Woodville, Nov. 7th.

Dear Dr. Arlington:

Please pardon me for intruding upon your time, but my heart is breaking, and I must speak.

Two years ago my son joined your church, and for a while seemed to be a different boy; he read

his Bible faithfully, and prayed regularly. His life seemed to be filled with the Divine presence. Poor child, he struggled manfully against his sins—which were many—abandoned his evil habits, and in a hundred ways showed the power of the Lord's grace. When I saw my poor, wayward boy striving to follow Jesus, I felt that God had answered my prayers, and the burden was taken from my heart. Since his father's death, I had not been able to control Rob, and I had spent sleepless nights waiting for my sinning boy to come home from his wild revels. My dear sir, nobody but a mother knows the agony of having a prodigal son. Paul died daily, I died nightly. But at last, Rob saw I was dying, and began to change his life. The shadows were removed, and light and joy came into my home. Everybody discovered the change in Rob, and the neighbors began to invite my outcast boy to their homes. But Rob heard you express your disbelief in the miracles of the Bible on several occasions; and since the Bible is made up largely of miracles, he has discarded the Book altogether. He says, too, that you disparaged the divinity of Jesus; so, poor child, he concluded that if Christ was not divine he was a fraud. You see, my dear Doctor, he could not understand your deep reasoning, and went astray. And no doubt you will be pained to learn that a few Sunday evenings ago, while

you were preaching that great sermon on art, Rob gathered his companions together, and spoke something like this: 'Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my cause; and be silent that ye may hear. Who is here so base, that he would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.' Then—and the tears fill my eyes as I write it—Rob went on, saying, 'We boys of Woodville are henceforth and forever free and independent. Down with superstition! Vive liberty!' And spreading the Bible wide open between the two Testaments, he poured on it kerosene oil and ignited it. And all the boys and a few drinking men shouted, 'Not this man, but Barabbas!'

My poor heart ached as I beheld from my window the Scriptures burning. A great blaze shot up into the darkness; and around it stood a circle of Woodville boys screaming, 'The Bible is gone!' I just couldn't stand it any longer; and throwing my shawl around me, I started towards the awful spot. I stood speechless; my heart was in my throat. The flame had now died down, leaving the old Book only a red coal. The upper pages had been reduced to a leaden crisp, and blown away by the evening wind. But—you know how letters remain after paper is burned—my eyes fell, as I stood gazing at the slowly consuming volume, on a page of the first epistle of Peter. My

strength came again, my voice returned. 'Come here, Rob; you haven't destroyed the Bible,' said I. 'Read those words just above that spot of red cinders.' And the boy's voice trembled as he stammered aloud, *The Word of the Lord endureth forever.* And in the faint glow of the dying embers, I could see that Rob had turned pale.

Since that night my boy has been serious; but he is not the comfort he was. He used to be my main stay, but now he has become hard and careless. He has strange notions. Rob surely did not understand your deep sermon. You mean right, but we plain people don't understand. Do you think Jesus preached that way? Don't take me to be criticising my superiors; but is this new gospel the best thing for boys?

I wish you would make it convenient to see Rob; he understood you to say music is prayer. Of course he is only a boy, and does not understand; but he has brought home a bran-new fiddle, and every time he saws the bow across it, he says he is praying. I do not know how or where he got the instrument, for he has been out of a job some weeks, and I have had no money to give him. Please call and talk with Rob. Somehow I can't help feeling that my boy is going to get into some great trouble. His ways are so strange. I am expecting any minute to hear that Rob has



“The Word of the Lord Endureth Forever.”



done something awful. Help him if you can.

Yours in tears,

MRS. MARY SHANDON.

Dr. Arlington threw the letter into the grate, frowning as he recalled the writer's solemn question, "Did Jesus preach that way?" The Doctor was still sitting with eyes fixed on the ashen epistle. A tap on the door aroused him from a reverie that was by no means pleasing. Tom Howard, a deacon in Grand Avenue Church, entered saying, with evident excitement, "Doctor, do you remember a youth of sixteen, received into the church two years ago, named Robert Shandon?"

Dr. Arlington bit his lip and frowned; but said nothing.

"Well," continued Howard, "Rob Shandon appeared, at the opening of court this morning, before Judge Castleberry, charged with robbing the money drawer of Jackson's grocery. The boy's counsel pleaded guilty, praying the mercy of the court, and urging in extenuation of the crime, that the youth had become unbalanced on the subject of religion, having embraced your views of prayer. Accordingly, argued the attorney, Rob, to cultivate his spiritual tendencies, stole money with which to purchase a violin, for he had been taught that music is prayer. "Please your honor," said counsel, "it is only a religious freak."

"What did Judge Castleberry say to that?" inquired Dr. Arlington with face all aglow.

"He required the young prisoner to stand up, and said, 'Robert Shandon, there are no freaks in religion; and as an officer of the law, I advise you to join a different school of theology. In a long experience in criminal courts, I have observed that culture, art, and music, have not kept men from ruin, and that the Bible alone is a sufficient guide in all matters of moral conduct. But, as this is your first offense, and in view of your mother's sufferings on your behalf, I shall make your punishment the lightest the law allows.'"

Dr. Arlington seemed troubled, and deacon Howard retired.

CHAPTER IV.

“THE VOICE OF A GOD, AND NOT OF A MAN.”

The pastor's sermons had continued to draw, with the aid of trained choirs and skilled orchestras and other accessories of sensuous worship, large and enthusiastic congregations. They were literary, crisp, sparkling, entertaining. He was by far the most popular minister the church had ever had, and his influence was growing with each recurring Sabbath under the spell of his fascinating imagery. A large number of persons had been added to the membership; institutional work had flourished, especially the bowling-alley and pool-tables. The whist club and the saloon of soft-drinks were on a substantial basis; the funds necessary to erect a church dancing-hall had been subscribed; while the boys' minstrel show numbered its scores. It is just, however to mention the fact that a certain class of the flock had absented themselves from service of late. They were mainly persons who held to the old standards, and made the Bible their supreme spiritual guide.

The approaching Sabbath would mark the sixth

anniversary of Dr. Arlington's pastorate, and elaborate preparations were making for the joyous occasion. Quartets and soloists were in training, while guilds, clubs, orders, and fraternities were vying with one another in the effort to place on the clergyman's brow the brightest coronet of Woodville's praise. The pulpit was decorated with palms and flowers, the galleries were festooned with bunting and holly. A life-size portrait, painted at the expense of the Woodville Comic Opera Troupe, was suspended above the reading-desk, a magnificent likeness of the gifted clergyman.

As a glorious Lord's Day came to its close, the full moon filled the streets with shadows and burnished the city's steeples and towers with silver. Admiring throngs climbed the marble steps of Grand Avenue Church, packing all available space in the edifice, except the aisles, which were kept clear in order to admit the numerous processions that were to march past the pulpit in recognition of the splendid services the pastor had rendered the community.

As the town clock was striking eight, Dr. Arlington, decorated with the badges of the numerous orders to which he belonged, slowly walked up the aisle, escorted by a bevy of girls who sported in waves of illusion, and gracefully tossed their spangled heads. Each radiant maiden bore

a banner representing some society in the Grand Avenue membership, while the great pipe organ sounded, *con molto espressione*, the Wedding March. The next number was a solo by Mrs. Stuart, whose late divorce and remarriage had created a weird sensation in the social circles of the city. The song was superb and enchained the audience in awful stillness until its very close, when, recovering from the potent spell, a thousand voices shrieked wild *encores*. The bewitching songsters reappeared and sang "Coming Through the Rye." Dr. Arlington clapped his hands, while the congregation, under the charm of Mrs. Stuart's splendid powers, gave way to rapturous applause that echoed and re-echoed in the fretted vault above.

When the congregation became quiet again, Col. James, the most influential brewer in the church, or even in the city, presented the pastor to the audience as the prophet of a new theology and the apostle of a new age—a man that sympathized with men, the iconoclast of bloody gospels, silly creeds, and mad Gods. The long-continued laughter and applause showed how well the Colonel knew the religious tenets of his hearers.

Dr. Arlington said: "I am a man; I stand for humanity; I am one of the multitude. If the race is lost, I want to share its lot. Instead of damna-

tion, I preach salvation. A Deity that would destroy his offspring, would be a cannibal; I would hate a God that could make a hell! The poet has finely sung:

‘In my choice,
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell.
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.’

Yes, the glory of earth and sky is man, as the seer divinely sang:

‘From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in Man.’ ”

Dr. Arlington remained standing amid thunders of applause and shrieks of approval, to receive the several orders, trades, fraternities, guilds, clubs, and societies, without distinction, as they defiled past the platform bearing significant devices. The Gaming Club lead the procession, preceded by a handsome youth in knickerbockers carrying on a silver platter an exquisite pack of Congress playing-cards. Next came the Terpsichorean Society with a silk banner displaying a superb picture of their patron Muse. The gentlemen, in full dress, paired off with the ladies, in low-necked bodices and slippers, and swung past

the pulpit to a spirited two-step rendered by the Mandolin Club. This performance brought down the house, while Dr. Arlington smiled and shuffled his feet. After this, Woodville's fashionable society was represented by the Late Hour Club and the Daughters of the Spotted Garter, bearing respectively a decanter and a punch-bowl. As these bejeweled members of the "Four Hundred" trooped past the pulpit, the clergyman exclaimed in an undertone, "The difference between the *elite* and the elect is only a matter of spelling!" Then marched the Boys' Brigade, armed *cap-a-pie*, to the sound of fife and drum; and halting at the rostrum, faced the audience in their bright uniforms, and went through the manual of arms. As these young heroes defiled away, they fired blank cartridges, filling the church with smoke—and prolonged applause. Finally, after numerous lodges and other organizations had performed their numbers on the programme, the Free Thinkers' Club paraded the aisles in the wake of a cart drawn by a goat. In this cart there was a coffin, displaying in gilt letters the following bit of doggerel:

In this box—y
Lies Orthodoxy.

This exhibition created a little diversion, and the

shouts of the people indicated that the old-time beliefs were not popular at Grand Avenue; while Dr. Arlington voiced the prevailing sentiment when he smiled and said:

“There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.”

When a purse of a thousand dollars had been presented to the pastor by his appreciative flock, the *gloria* was magnificently rendered by the choir, and the phonograph pronounced the benediction.

As the congregation melted away, compliments on every hand were freely paid to the bold genius that for six years had filled the leading pulpit of Woodville. A goodly number of bar-tenders and dealers at the bucket-shops signified their intention of uniting with the church. A chronic tippler expressed the thought of many when he declared that he had found a preacher who had a religion to suit everybody; and that if he remained in the community every sot and gambler in town would join Grand Avenue Church.

CHAPTER V.

THE HUMANISTIC CHURCH.

After this splendid success, Dr. Arlington set to work to multiply the institutional features of Grand Avenue Church. He had long been hampered by the restrictions of the orthodox faith, and felt an insatiate craving for a broader field of service. He had naturally chafed under the dogma that some men are elected to everlasting felicity, when, as he claimed, all men are thus elected. He maintained, furthermore, that Christian leaders had insisted too strongly on a clearly demarcated line between right and wrong, whereas these terms are but relative. One community believes evil what another believes good; therefore, we should be cautious in establishing ethical bounds. The difference, he held, is rather between wisdom and folly. The burden of the church is not to save men from hell, but from ignorance. The task of the seer is not to unfold panoramas of an intangible world above, but to stimulate and direct the artistic sense of the race living in a real world below. The aesthetic taste is worth a thousand "prayerful frames," while

bodily ease and mental repose befit the denisons of earth better than the beatitudes of a ghostly experience. Dr. Arlington insisted that the Church, like the Sabbath, was made for man, and hence should be intensely human, or, as he preferred to say, humanistic. The Church should be in such close touch with the world that men would naturally gravitate into it, just as they do into a political party.

Desirous of reducing his theories to practice, the learned divine gave careful study to the social and religious conditions of Woodville. He visited the shops, the mills, the factories; he freely conversed with rich rouses, gamblers, thieves, and the chain-gang. He succeeded in worming from all classes their objections to the Church, and noted their divergent views of moral questions in his gilt-edged memorandum.

One morning, as he sat in his study pondering the "humanistic problem," under the inspiration of a happy thought, he cried out, "Eureka! I have found it! Amen." And rising from his easy chair, he exclaimed in genuine ecstasy, "The solution of all theology is a humanistic church." Clasping his hands behind his back, beads of perspiration standing on his brow, he strode rapidly to and fro across the velvet carpet, soliloquizing in broken sentences after the following manner: "Such an institution would meet the moral neces-

sities of every class in the community. Astonishing that the Apostles did not see this vision! If Christ had only lived in this momentous age! Yes; such an institution would grip men of flesh and blood in its ecclesiastical arms and lift them out of the noisome pit of ignorance. Such a church would be the home of all mankind—a trysting place for the unhappy convict, and a bower for deflowered ladies. The rich and the poor meet together; the good and the bad shake hands in humanistic bonds. Universal brotherhood!—everybody's church! Instead of this splendid consummation, the pulpit declares its message to a coterie of women, a band of children, a few men, and a multitude of empty pews. And this pitiable pageant on the world's stage is called the kingdom of heaven! This farce must cease, and the cross of Chirst must be adapted to the crosses of men. Did not the man of Nazareth say that, if lifted up, he would draw all men to him? That auspicious day has surely not yet dawned. Our preachers have held the cross so high that its magnetism has been lost to the begrimed sons of toil. Yes, that's it! The great majority of men prefer certain forms of ease and certain lines of amusement, and to reach this predominating element in the social fabric, the Church must be humanistic, that is, in sympathy with all possible conditions of humanity. As we

now see it, Christianity is walking on stilts, and stepping over the heads of the rank and file of the race. The remedy lies in adapting the machinery of the Church to the needs of the age, and in the use of methods that appeal to all conditions of society. An antiquated Gospel is the curse of this new century. Away with inflexible creeds and cast-iron methods!"

With such radical theories exciting his brain, the humanistic reformer retired from his arduous labors to his luxurious bed, and dreamed of a world saved by the application of mechanical methods

When Dr. Arlington had elaborated his new church, even to the minutest details, he submitted the fascinating plan to the Woodville press. The editors gave their most prominent columns to a display, in large and showy type, of the leading features of the new religious program of Grand Avenue Church. The revised order of worship was announced to go into effect on the following Sunday. The papers were enthusiastic in their prediction of a glad new era in the religious status of Woodville. They maintained that everybody is religious any way, but it remained for Dr. Arlington to adjust the Church to this fundamental fact so long misunderstood by theologians. He was, they claimed, a greater conqueror than Alexander, and a greater discoverer

than Columbus, for the reason that he had triumphed over all the creeds of Christendom, and revealed the new world of human life.

As one might suppose, the entire city was moved by a weird sensation. Some pious persons were shocked, but the great mass of Grand Avenue's fashionable folk were charmed as never before by anything called worship, while non-church-goers and infidels swaggered along the streets expressing their unfeigned approbation of the new order of things in the frantic shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

The anxiously awaited Sabbath morning dawned balmy and clear—not a cloud to cast a shadow over the splendid installation of Dr. Arlington's new theology. At an early hour the church was crowded, and hundreds were turned from the doors in dire disappointment.

At eleven o'clock, the popular pulpit orator appeared on the platform in full dress and was wildly greeted by a series of Chataqua salutes long continued. After he had recognized the compliment of his audience by a graceful bow, the choir struck up

"Behold! the conquering hero comes!"

This patriotic air was followed by the national hymn,

“My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty.”

Then the minister, having stated that the Bible would be used henceforth only as a book of occasional reference, announced that there were many bibles, all equally inspired, and that the reading lessons would be taken from classic writings of all times, according to occasion. The preacher said further that the Bible was an antiquated book whose day had passed, and inasmuch as it offended the major part of mankind, it could never furnish a platform on which the entire race could stand. “And hereafter,” he added, “Grand Avenue Church will have very little to do with the Bible.” Rapturous applause and deafening yells indorsed this radical assertion. When order had been secured, the minister read as the morning lesson extracts from the *Apology* of Socrates, *Cicero on Friendship*, *Ruskin*, *Emerson* and *Darwin*.

Skilful critic that he was, Dr. Arlington learnedly compared the philosophical teachings of these world-masters, as he termed them, carefully weighing their deductions and balancing their differences. He closed his profound appreciation of these “apostles of the race” by contrasting two of them: “Socrates, forever prating about his divinity that accompanied him, was superstitious;

Darwin, discarding music, poetry, and art, was lacking in humanism."

As the pastor took his seat, one of the trustees gave the following notices:

At the evening service, a sacred concert will be given under the auspices of the American Hilarity Company, an artistic traveling opera.

Next Sabbath evening, a baby elephant which has been secured at considerable expense from the Philadelphia Zoological Garden, will be exhibited, accompanied by a racy discourse on the larger animals.

On last Sabbath evening of the month, there will be union services of all the young people's organizations of the church, the entertainment to be given by the Grand Avenue Amateur Theatrical Club which will reproduce some of the most impressive scenes in Goethe's Faust.

The Laughing Club will meet at the close of the midweek service. A full attendance is requested.

The audience will note that the pastor's new program has added tone and life to all of the services of the church, and each number promises special attractions, and will be rich in humanics.

When the announcements were over, the great organ played as an interlude one of Chopin's stirring waltzes, which moved many hearts and not a few "fantastic toes." Under the inspiration of the music, six charming girls, whose office it became in the new regime to pass the collection baskets, addressed themselves to their new task

as if to the manor born. These handsome lassies, with cheeks radiant with paint and feet keeping time to the inspiring pipes, exerted a magical influence on the pocket-books of the men. When a gentleman dropped into the basket a silver piece or a bill, the beautiful ushers smiled; when he cast in a nickel they pouted; and when he offered a penny, they shook their beribboned heads and made their ostrich plumes quiver with indignation. Naturally, this was the largest current collection ever taken in the history of the church, and the innovation from the start promised to be a signal success.

The next number on the program was

“John Anderson My Jo,”

sung bewitchingly by two handsome lassies in low-necked costume.

This favorite Scotch ditty called forth persistent encores, deafening yells, and cat-calls in the gallery, answered by a captivating rendition of

“Coming Through the Rye.”

At this point in the worship, the preacher took occasion to remark on the superiority of the new song literature over the vapid hymns of an antiquated Christianity. He assured the congreg-

gation that in the future all the music, whether instrumental or vocal, would thrill with human interest; and the works of the masters of pathos, whether sung by a minstrel troupe or rendered before kings in a grand opera, would be selected according to their humanistic qualities.

"Now," continued Dr. Arlington, "we are going to have prayer. This number requires neither words nor special attitude, but reposeful reverie. It is a mental exercise, reaching its climax under the influence of music. Think about the things that please you. Picture the sort of house you would like to live in. Imagine yourselves happy. If you are weak, resolve to be strong. If you are sick, determine to get well. If you have committed indiscretions, vulgarly called sins, forget them. These pleasing reflections and holy frames, accompanied by divine harmonies, are prayer.

"The organ will now lead us in our devotions."

For ten minutes waves of music rolled and rocked, and sighed and sobbed, and beat and burst, while the audience prayed. In the midst of the devotions, an enterprising artist took a flash-light picture of the happy worshipers, which he afterwards developed and sold on post cards to members of the flock as souvenirs of this eventful Sabbath morning.

After the prayer service, Dr. Arlington, in a

very happy way, charmed his great congregation by outlining what he called "the social hour," predicting that it would be one of the most attractive numbers on the new program of worship. "Man is a convivial being," observed the preacher, "and must have provision made for his customs and habits. Men are largely flesh, and they must have those diversions and indulgencies that appeal to the flesh. If they can't get them at church, they will find them in the low dives of the slums. The church was made for humanity; therefore it must gratify the cravings of human nature."

The Doctor stated that a telegraph office had been installed in the basement of the building in order that the latest happenings in the way of our social and political life might be reported to the congregation during the social hour. "For instance," said he, "the most atrocious murders, remarkable lynchings, important divorce cases, the result of famous base-ball games, the doings of strikers, any sudden changes in the stock markets, and reports of storms, floods, and fires."

The pastor announced further that arrangement had been effected with a celebrated artist to reproduce on a specially prepared blackboard the most recent political cartoons. And that next Sabbath a jester would be added to the attractions of the social hour, who would select and

recite the most side-splitting jokes and the most sparkling humorous sayings of the day.

“Now, gentlemen,” said the minister, “let us begin this social service with a good smoke. The young ladies will serve cream and cake. After that they will wait on you with the best brands of cigars, cigarettes and also pipes and Duke’s Mixture. Take your choice. The ladies will be served with tea by the young gentlemen. Let everybody eat, drink, and be merry.”

While the convivialities were in progress, and rich spiral columns of smoke were filling the church, a telegram was brought from the office below, and read amid profound silence and evident expectation. It was a report of a prize fight in San Francisco, just off. Thus it read:

Tim Tenny was knocked out last night in an attempt to wrest the championship from Chiefy Neil, and died this morning. Official examination determined that death resulted from cerebral hemorrhage, caused, it is supposed, by a blow. Various drugs, including strychnine, were administered to Tenny in an effort to revive him after the fight, but the beating was so brutal that he never rallied.

Tenny went down before Neil’s hard left-hand blows in the fourteenth round, when Neil went at him like a madman, and hammered him in the face while blood poured from his mouth and nose. The helpless victim dropped against the ropes.

His head sank on his chest and his arms fell limp to his sides. In eight hours the end came. The spectators were estimated at 12,000.

The congregation received the dispatch with marked satisfaction, and commented rapturously on the practical importance of this part of the service. A number of the gentlemen were buoyant because they had won the amounts they booked on the fight, while others were dejected because they had lost. As soon as order could be secured, Dr. Arlington announced as his subject

“THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CHURCH.”

He said in part:

“The age demands a church which the mass of mankind approves. Whatever is objectionable to the masses must be eliminated. The twentieth century church repudiates hell and the devil and miracles as superstitions of the dark ages. Humanistic views of repentance and regeneration must take the place of the somber and impossible experiences required by the vanishing theology of our fathers. The church must be social. As to its joys and methods, it must surpass the world at its own game. It must have better music than the opera, better amusements than the theatre, and better social life than the clubs. It must exalt the brotherhood of man and

the fatherhood of God, patriotism, liberty of conscience, and the supremacy of art and culture.

"Such a church will attract men, for all conditions of society will recognize the inestimable advantages it offers. Among the numerous benefits of this practical Christianity, I name a few that all my hearers will recognize. The privilege of artistic burial rights. You will be declared a member of this great church, beautiful hymns will be sung over you, and honor and respectability will be added to your memory. But while you live you will move as a member of fashionable society because of connection with this body. You will share the pleasures accruing from church suppers, minstrels, card-parties, and the dances. You will also have part in the honors that are connected with the church foot-ball and base-ball teams, besides the skating-rink, pool-tables, ten-pins, and many other projected attractions."

After the delivery of this phenomenal sermon, which gave the keynote of his ministry for the future, Dr. Arlington extended an invitation to persons who wished to unite with Grand Avenue Church to come forward. About two hundred presented themselves for membership. He stated that he did not "open the doors of the church," for the reason that the doors were never shut. All persons were eligible who thought the church relation might do them good or bring them any

comfort. No religious belief was necessary, and no definite creed was required.

As the pastor received the candidates into church fellowship, he exultantly called attention to the fact that they represented widely divergent views, and came from very different social environments. Some of these were moralists, some Christian Scientists, two Mormons, one Jew, several ballet dancers, and a dozen or more infidels. "The old methods," he exclaimed, "could never have reached these honest classes of our citizenship, and but for a humanistic gospel, they would never have been gathered into the fold."

Just as Dr. Arlington raised his hands to dismiss the congregation, a stylish young woman, clasping an infant in her arms, rose from her seat in the first pew, and holding up the child, she shrieked in an outburst of relief, while the audience sat breathless, "Now, Dr. Arlington, since the Bible has been abolished, you can afford to acknowledge your own!"

CHAPTER VI.

"I NOMINATE JESUS CHRIST."

Recent occurrences at Grand Avenue Church had caused a decided reaction on the part of some who had been the friends and admirers of Dr. Arlington, and awakened united opposition on the part of the spiritual element of the membership. Many questions arose. Was the pastor a shepherd or a hireling? Was he a representative of the Head of the Church? Did Jesus teach such views, or would he approve such methods? Suppose all the world accepted Dr. Arlington's theories, would the world be evangelized? Would such Christianity be better than paganism? If such religion prevailed, would not society be hopelessly lost? If the pastor's theology is not the gate *of* hell, is it not the gate *to* hell?

While Dr. Arlington was aware that he still had a large and influential coterie, he also realized that his prestige was broken. His religious vagaries and cultured unbeliefs must only create wider breaches, for many were thinking. Hence, while at the floodtide of his popularity, he deemed it wise to offer his resignation. This he did the next Sunday morning.

Judge Castleberry arose, and in a business-like way moved the acceptance of the resignation. The membership was so utterly astounded, that ominous silence brooded on every lip for several minutes. At length, however, the call for remarks brought to his feet Mason Saunders, an admirer of Dr. Arlington, who said, "I object to the motion. I know there have been some vague rumors afloat affecting the character of our beloved pastor, but they come from his enemies. Then, there are old fogies in the church who discount Dr. Arlington because he does not swallow the story of Jonah and the whale, and because he rejects the miracles, and does not accept the vicarious atonement, and the common theories of inspiration, and a dozen other fads that have been exploded a thousand times. No; I hope never to see the day when Grand Avenue Church will be run by fossils." This speech was received with prolonged applause; and a hubbub of approving voices showed a large following of the minister.

Next spoke Col. James, president of the Woodville Brewing Association: "I do not understand the cause that prompts this resignation, and I think we should unanimously petition our beloved pastor to withdraw it. I should never have been a Christian but for his strong sermons and liberal views. And I assert now, candidly, that I would never belong to any church that had strait-

laced notions and blue-laws; nor would I sit under the ministry of any man who is always talking about hell and Jesus Christ."

Judge Castleberry followed, saying, "We would have a far better church if we had more preaching along the line Col. James has condemned. Our church has been going down for some years. The congregation has increased, but the spiritual power has waned. Instead of a sanctuary, we have a show; instead of Christ, we have culture. The membership, in the room of being closely knit together, is loosely joined by a thin bandage of sentiment. The teaching we have had of late has lowered the tone of Christianity, as the remarks by the two gentlemen who preceded me will attest; and, instead of producing stalwart manhood, it has generated a brood of mountebanks. Give us a pure Gospel or a vacant pulpit!"

Many hissed; and Mrs. Stuart, the banker's wife, revealed the hearts of a multitude when she said, in a clear voice, "I stand by the pastor!"

Yet, Mrs. Eli Robins, in widow's weeds, bespoke the opinion of others when she declared, "I cannot stand by the pastor; for you all know my great sorrow in the awful death of my husband, who had imbibed the peculiar views of Dr. Arlington, and who was never afterwards to me what he was before." And she covered her face with

her handkerchief—but her vow had been fulfilled.

All hearts were touched, that were capable of emotion, when Mrs. Shandon, with sad face and tremulous voice, made this brief statement: “I share the feelings of Mrs. Robins; for under the influence of recent theology, I have lost my poor boy”—here the mother hesitated and sobbed, then, wiping her eyes, resumed, “and Rob is at this holy hour in state’s-prison for crime due to the preaching of a Christless gospel; in consequence, the light has gone out of my life, and my poor heart is dead.” She fell back into her seat, as a hundred handkerchiefs performed their sad offices for moistened eyes.

From all parts of the auditorium came the cry, “Question! question!” answered by opposing shouts of “No! no! foul play! hurrah for Arlington! hurrah for Arlington!” The confusion was further increased by the use of abusive epithets culminating in a fisticuff between two prominent brethren. As soon as order could be sufficiently restored, the vote was taken, and the resignation was accepted by a small majority.

Half a year had passed, and Grand Avenue Church remained pastorless. In the mean time, an irreparable breach in the brotherhood had been caused by Dr. Arlington’s resignation; though many of the differences were somewhat healed temporarily in the common desire to secure

a worthy successor, as each faction counted worthiness. A pulpit committee had been duly appointed, consisting of Col. James, Mason Saunders, and Hon. Charles Kent. These gentlemen represented the three elements most conspicuous and influential in the membership. How three men so thoroughly diverse in life, capacity, and spiritual attainments, should ever agree, was a matter of conjecture with sober heads. Col. James was a man of strong character, violent prejudices, a successful liquor-dealer, carrying considerable weight in town politics, having withal a large following in the church. He wanted an orator of inane utterances, shoreless liberality, vapid theology, a retailer of current events. He was looking for a minister who would regulate the ethics of the pulpit by the sentiment of the pew for a consideration of comfortable finances. His ideal preacher would never thunder against vice, never expose the evils of the community, and above all, never arraign before the bar of public opinion the liquor business.

Mason Saunders, the young lawyer, was of a different type; indeed, he was a nondescript, a moral dreamer, without convictions. A religious concert, fair, or show, was his ideal of Christly life; while his conception of Christian work involved no higher activities than the getting up of a picnic or a church-supper followed by games of

progressive euchre. He was fond, too, of gilt-edge sermons, perfumed rhetoric, an emasculated gospel. He was, besides, an ardent admirer of Dr. Arlington, a disciple of Christian Science, and an ecclesiastical doll. Saunders, of course, was searching the pulpits of the country for a ministerial invertibrate.

Hon. Charles Kent, however, was a man of another fibre. He possessed sound judgment, extensive learning, and a Christ-like spirit. He was resolved on securing a pastor of dignified bearing, of orthodox faith, and of fearless spirit—a task by no means easy in view of the worldly trend of the Grand Avenue flock; though, fortunately, there was a remnant that had not bowed the knee to Baal, and that sympathized with the Senator's loftier aims.

Months went by, and with them, many candidates. Some were too old, some too young, some too weak in imaginative power, some too homely, some preached too long, some lacked sociability, others were too familiar, and all were too anxious to come. Several said they could fill the church at every service; not a few urged their claim on the ground that they were experts in church entertainments; while others said they were of an evangelistic turn, and could get people into the fold that nobody else could reach. No two of the committee ever approved the same candidate;

hence, no recommendation had been made. Finally, however, they did agree not to name any man that had yet been heard, but to invite, each member of the committee, his choice, to preach on successive Sabbaths a trial sermon.

Col. James' candidate came first. A middle-aged man of fine presence, slightly corpulent, evidently fond of the good things of the world. He had a resonant voice, spoke easily, was satisfied with himself and all mankind, was looking for a fat salary. He was careful to offend none of his hearers; and, avoiding all allusion to sin, confined himself to generalities; holding that God is the All-Father, supernal goodness, universal light, supreme potency, and abysmal love. In quoting a passage of Scripture containing *hell*, he omitted that word; and concluded his discourse with graceful couplets from the poets. Col. James was pleased, and his friends wanted at once to cast their votes for the candidate they had just heard.

On the next Sabbath, Mason Saunders put up a clergyman of another mould. He posed as philosopher, literary critic, a propounder of paradoxes, and a gesticulating machine. He had just turned his twenty-fifth year, wore eye-glasses, gold-rimmed, attached to a golden chain, had a slight lisp and a crushed mustache. Furthermore, he spoke fluently, delivered gracefully, dressed elegantly,

and had personal magnetism of a certain quality. He rejected all the miracles, considered the fiery furnace a pious fraud, the garden of Eden a myth, the supernatural birth of Christ a pretty Hebrew story, while regeneration is an oriental figure of speech. He showed how many things found in the Bible could not be harmonized with modern research and discovery. He accepted the Scriptures as a national literature, instructive and beautiful, as also were the literatures of Buddhism and Confucianism. He asserted with manifest pride that Jesus of Nazareth had never been surpassed by any teacher of any age or clime. The discourse bristled with quotations from "The Light of Asia" and the sacred books of India. He too had a host of admirers, wild in his praises, and prepared to call at once. Even Col. James and his party saw that they could not do better than to unite on this rising pulpit star.

The last candidate to be considered was the choice of the Hon. Charles Kent. The humble Senator knew full well that numerous and serious difficulties surrounded his preference, yet he also understood the high character and moral strength of his supporters.

The congregation was on tiptoe to hear, as they supposed, a trial minister, on whose orthodoxy they would sit in summary judgment, when Mr. Kent stepped to the front and said:

"Grand Avenue Church is, for the most part, a magnificent museum of the living dead, embalmed in ribbons, silks, feathers, and broadcloth, and ornamented with jewels of gold, pearl and diamond, whose radiance is, like the phosphorescence of the forest, the glitter of decay. The sanctuary has become an elegant club-house, scented with wine, soiled by sin, given up to ease, luxury, and pride. It speaks the world's language, wears the world's uniform, lives the world's life, and has only the world's power. Our church has refused to be evangelized, and from its carnal courts the Divine Spirit has fled. Grand Avenue lacks vitality, purpose, inspiration; hence we are groping blindly in unbelief and spiritual darkness. Our spectacular methods, sensational ministry, worldly life, and sordid aims, have debased us in the eyes of men, and have robbed us of our influence for good. A Christian church must be more than a lodge, a Christian minister above a clown.

"You have heard the candidates proposed by the other members of the committee, and you have formed your judgment concerning their fitness to minister to you in holy things. Having prayed over the matter most earnestly, I have been, as I think, led to name a pastor who, wherever tried, has proved to be a good shepherd, feeding well his flock and caring tenderly for the lambs. He

is simple in his preaching, always Scriptural, never frivolous, never profane or foolish. He loves God, he loves men; he never makes any mistakes; and his work is always successful.

“ I NOMINATE JESUS CHRIST AS THE PASTOR OF GRAND AVENUE CHURCH.”

CHAPTER VII.

HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT.

When the name of Jesus Christ was mentioned as the Good Shepherd of the flock, a weird spell came over the vast congregation. Such a conception was to many so bold, so novel, so startling. A large part of the audience had never associated our Lord with the church, seeming to think that the membership was entirely independent, merely getting prestige from the use of Messiah's splendid name. Christ was patron, that was all. He was not supposed to control the energies of Christians, nor impose law, nor exact obedience, nor require the supreme homage of loving hearts. Christ is the head of the church; has he given up his office? He is the Good Shepherd; has he resigned? He is the real pastor of every true church; has he abandoned his flock to the wolves? The Divine Pastor employs men to preach his word, comfort his saints, and lead his flock; but he remains both Lord and Master. He enjoined on Peter, as sub-pastor or undershepherd, to feed his sheep, but the sheep were not Peter's.

A motion was made to go into the election of a

pastor, and Christ is the nominee! O Grand Avenue, thine hour is come. Wilt thou have this man to rule over thee? Wilt thou sink in sin or rise to holiness? Wilt thou die or wilt thou live? Dost thou follow a god of darkness or the God of light? Speak out as a trumpet that gives no uncertain sound, for, in thy vote lies thy destiny.

Remarks having been called for, Col. James was the first to respond.

"This church," said he, "can never afford to become a praying and singing nursery again. Superstition, old-fogyism, blue-laws, strait-jackets, and the inquisition have long since been relegated to paganism. We are living in a new age, with new ideas, with larger vision. My objection to the Candidate before us is, that he is antiquated, contracted, narrow, and not abreast of the age; he is a religious partisan; and he makes demands of a free and independent church like an autocrat, a despot, or a king. And, moreover, the Candidate would take us back two thousand years to 'the dim, religious light' of ecclesiastical history, and restore the Christianity of the New Testament. Just as well stand in the United States Senate and ask that enlightened body to go back in its legislation to the codes of Solon and Draco or the traditions of the Sanhedrin. The faith of modern times as far surpasses the Christianity of Christ as an ocean steamship surpasses

an Indian canoe. I give notice that I shall vote against the Candidate."

As the Colonel took his seat, Mason Saunders rose and said:

"I am with Col. James. This two-thousand-year-old religion is out of date. We live in the mad rush and crash of the twentieth century, and must have an up-to-date religion to suit the times. Above all, how can this church endorse views it never entertained? In whose memory has such a position ever been supported? Who, but a few fossils, believe it possible? We have outgrown such intolerance. Are we a set of slaves to have the whip cracked over us as in the dark days of superstition and in the savage period of the Pilgrim Fathers? We," concluded Saunders, tossing his handsome head, "have sailed away from Apostolic shallows, and have committed the ship of Zion to broader seas. In this progressive age, no one cares to have an apostle shot at him every time he goes to an evening german, or takes a social glass, or fails to say his prayers. Such ideas may suit Lilliputians, but they ill befit the brains of men."

Saunders himself regarded this effort as quite a success; while Col. James, laughing, warmly congratulated him.

The spirit of antichrist further showed itself in the remarks of Professor Albert Lyman, who

held the chair of divinity in Woodville College.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said the learned Doctor, "I had hoped that this silly twaddle about a primitive gospel had been hushed by the diviner voices of this new age, and that the pious dreams of ancient times had been dissolved by the rising sun of scientific day. Apostolic fads and superstitions have fled at the approach of the X-ray, higher criticism, and impartial investigation. The times have changed, and we have changed with them. All things Jewish have passed away;—Jewish Bible, Jewish customs, and even the Jewish Messiah. This church is American, not Semitic; and I aver with equal faith and patriotism, that our banner is not the Cross, but Old Glory." Here the Professor was interrupted by rapturous applause. "The teaching of Jesus," resumed the Doctor, "was necessarily narrow; for he belonged to a narrow age, and a still narrower race. He meant well, but his environment was against him. It is not surprising, then, that the modern church has outgrown the dogmas of the Nazarene. Not more than one in a hundred thinks like the Son of Mary, and that one does not follow him.

"Again: Jesus would divide the congregation hopelessly. He would reinstate Hebrew superstitions, which all enlightened minds have relegated to an unhappy past, and impose customs and bur-

dens that would destroy society as now constituted. Business itself would be impossible under the commercial methods of Mt. Zion; for trains and trolleys and steamships would stop their wheels when the clock struck Sunday. Science would be retarded twenty centuries, while a thousand pleasures would be placed under the ban of an effete gospel. If a son should ask a cigar of a father, he would give him a catechism; or if he should ask a Sunday paper, he would offer him a Bible.

"I shall vote against the Candidate, for I can never be a Christian!"

Some wept as they heard these terrible words, yet the Professor had voiced the sentiments of the major part of the audience.

The closing speech was made by John Morgan, who, rising with a shadow on his face, said in tones of awful solemnity, "We have come to the parting of the ways. Several speakers have avowed that they will not have this Man to reign over them. Then, who will reign over them? To what party do they belong? The crisis has come when we must decide whether Christ is the Head of the church or not. If we vote for him, we thereby agree to follow his authority and to discard the heresies that have crept in among us. If we vote against him, we declare ourselves infidels. The issue is clearly drawn. This is the

question for your decision: *Is this congregation a Christian church?*"

"No!" replied Dr. Lyman, as Morgan took his seat; "Grand Avenue is rather a pan-creedal church. We accept all philosophies, and even religions, that meet the requirements of modern culture; and we welcome all creeds, whether formulated by Zoroaster, Confucius, Christ, or Gautama, so far as they are in harmony with the inner consciousness of man."

As the ballots were distributed, many of the members filled them out without thought, and frivolously; a few hesitated; some declined to vote; while others fell upon their knees in prayer, writing in tenderest love on their wisps of paper, "For Christ."

When the ballots had been collected and counted, the tellers announced the result as follows:

Total number of votes cast.....	405
For Christ, votes cast.....	73
Against Christ, votes cast.....	332
Christ rejected—no election.	

A Jew, who had been interested in the momentous issue of the church's action, applied at once for membership, saying, "I can now join dees chu'ch. Dare ish no needt of Christ; ve zhust needt Got, and not much of 'im. De wo'lvt needts business mo' dan relizhshun."

Prof. Lyman proposed also the name of a Japanese student, who was attending a course of lec-

tures at the College on Comparative Religions with a view to becoming a Buddhist priest.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I AM A CHRISTIAN."

When Mason Saunders closed his speech against Christ, he glanced furtively to his left as if to see what impression his remarks had made on Corinne Howard, whose smile he valued above that of all others. Observing her beautiful face deeply crimsoned, he thought he discovered disappointment stamped unmistakably upon all of its noble features. It became at once clear to him that Corinne had taken her stand resolutely with the spiritual forces of the church, thus espousing the cause that he had just trampled under his feet; and he began to fear that there was now a distance between them greater than he imagined could ever exist.

After the conference had adjourned, while many were hastening through the vestibule, little squads of congenial spirits gathered in the lecture-room discussing the action of the church, some jubilant in the triumph of liberalism, others heart-broken by the rejection of their Lord. Miss Howard was standing by her father as he was busy outlining a plan for the guidance of the

Redeemer's flock, when young Saunders, thinking he saw his opportunity to engage Corinne's company, approached her with the prepossessing air of a man of society, and asked, in a low tone, to have the pleasure of escorting her home. The flush had now died out of Corinne's cheek, and the sadness had given place to a fixed calmness. She bent her magnificent azure eyes upon her lover for a moment, then, with the refinement of a lady and the dignity of religion, she replied, "Mr. Saunders, please be kind enough to excuse me; my father has my company to-day."

Saunders colored and his pulse quickened. Corinne had never appeared to show reserve towards him before, and his pride was touched. It was marvellous in the eyes of the brilliant young lawyer, belonging as he did, to one of the old aristocratic families of Woodville, and a leader of its society, how any young lady could treat him with indifference. And then, too, it was all the stranger, in view of the fact that he had a successful practice on his own account, and at the same time was heir to his father's immense fortune, that Corinne Howard, though cultured and beautiful, and possessing the figure of a Grecian goddess, should refuse his attentions. As he gazed upon the handsome girl, whose dominant principle was faith, he asked in somewhat haughty tone, "Corinne Howard, may I ask an

explanation of your refusal to accept my company this morning?"

Corinne, recalling the irreverent and sceptical remarks of Saunders in the business meeting, drew herself up in the full consciousness of right, and calmly replied, "Because I am a Christian!"

When Miss Howard returned to her home, she took up one of the exquisite invitations, which announced that the marriage would take place just three weeks from thence, and read it half aloud. She almost swooned as she realized that she was bound by her sacred honor to Mason Saunders. All the arrangements had been made for a fashionable wedding, the invitations had been sent to a large circle of friends, her trousseau had been ordered from New York modistes, and even some presents had begun to arrive. Was it possible, she thought, to make an honorable change at this late hour? She had recently consecrated herself to Jesus, vowing to follow him as her great Shepherd. What does the Shepherd say to his flock? "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Saunders, though a nominal Christian, was really an unbeliever, as he had clearly shown in the late church conference. Saunders or Christ was the perplexing question that now faced her. In her agony of mind she fled to her dressing-case, taking there-

from a large bundle of letters, tied with ribbons, which she had sacredly preserved. They were all written in the same smooth Spencerian hand, and all smacked of love and marriage. She knew them well-nigh by heart, for no other letters had ever awakened within her such happy memories, and the one beatific dream of her life had been to be the wife of their author. The last of these missives, received just the day before the sad occurrences at Grand Avenue Church, she read and reread.

My divinest Corinne: Since you gave me your heart, my soul has leaped into the light. I never knew the meaning of joy before—real, lasting joy. The whole circle of the gods are smiling on my path, while Hebe fills my cup with nectar. And now, to think that in three short weeks you will be Mrs. Saunders! mine, wholly mine, only mine, forever mine! I dream all night of you. I behold in splendid visions your angelic form bending above me. I see heaven in your eyes, I hear seraphic symphonies in your voice. The stars encircle your brow; the roses sleep on your cheeks; winding brooks, at your smile, "break into dimples and laugh in the sun," while the gates of Elysium open to your touch.

Only three weeks, dearest, sweetheart mine, and the Nymphs, Naiads, and Sirens will chant, in accents holy, "Mrs. Corinne Howard Saunders!"

Yours only and forever,

MASON.

“Mrs. Saunders!” exclaimed Corinne; and she could not help feeling some degree of satisfaction as she uttered the words. What young woman in Woodville, thought she, would refuse to accept that proud title? Saunders ruled, with the power of an autocrat, the fashionable circles of the city, controlled largely the policy of Grand Avenue Church, and withal, was a multimillionaire. And yet, he was an unbeliever! So many questions arose in her mind. Mason, thought she, had made an ardent lover, but would he prove a congenial husband? She asked herself over and over again, could an unsaved man, and he an avowed enemy of Christ, add anything to her life? Could she draw inspiration from daily contact with an unbeliever? Could a sceptic help her in her pilgrimage to the skies, or sympathize with her inmost longings and profoundest love? Would not Mason’s worldliness act as a damper to her hopes? Could she behold his selfish schemes and not shudder to call him husband? Deity has declared of the married pair that they twain shall be one—one in purpose, faith, destiny; but can the soul, redeemed by the blood of the cross, be one with an unbeliever? Can there be concord between Christ and Belial? Can two walk together except they be agreed? As such misgivings wrought on her sensitive conscience, she sank upon her knees, and told Jesus the whole story of



"So Many Questions Arose in Her Mind."

her anguish. When she arose, calm and resolute, she wrote these crucial words:

Dear Mason: I have thought I owed you a larger explanation than I gave yesterday as we parted; and, without preface, please bear with me while I add this reason. When I gave you my promise of marriage, I was sincere in thinking I understood my affections. We were both young; and I confess that I, for my part, looked almost entirely on the romantic side of matrimony. I had not duly considered many things then, which now appear to be absolutely essential. For instance, there should be congeniality between us; and yet, I find, to my great sorrow, that we differ widely in our religious convictions. I love Christ more than I can ever love any man, while you even rejected him. Your attitude towards our sacred religion has just lately been made clear; hence this question had never received my attention; and besides, recent developments at Grand Avenue Church have changed my views of life and duty in some very important particulars. I have learned that the Saviour is enthroned above all, and that no alliance should be formed that obscures his place or dishonors his name.

In view of these changes, I feel that I am but acting an honorable part, alike to you and to myself, in dissolving our engagement. I hope, Mason, you will not think me either frivolous or fickle, but simply sincere. It is a matter of regret that I could not have made known to you the contents of this letter before arrangements for the wedding had progressed, but the deter-

mining cause was lacking till the unfortunate developments of our late church conference.

I return herewith your ring and letters.

Your friend,

CORINNE HOWARD.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WRECK.

At the close of the late conference, the elect resolved to meet at the church the next Sabbath evening for the purpose of reconsidering the action which had rejected Jesus. The opposition, made up largely of non-church-goers, fashionable society people, and sceptics, had become quite indifferent since their fierce conduct at the previous meeting, to which they had been drummed up for a special purpose. This circumstance explains the absence of the anti-Christians on the present occasion, and also their entire disregard of the important notice served on them by the faithful and true.

When the little band of believers came together, the recent action of the church was reconsidered on motion of a member who had been led to see the error of his former vote.

Jesus was now reverently elected as the Shepherd of Grand Avenue Church, and John Morgan was chosen to extend the call.

Humbly kneeling, hands clasped, faces turned upward, the flock made known its choice, through

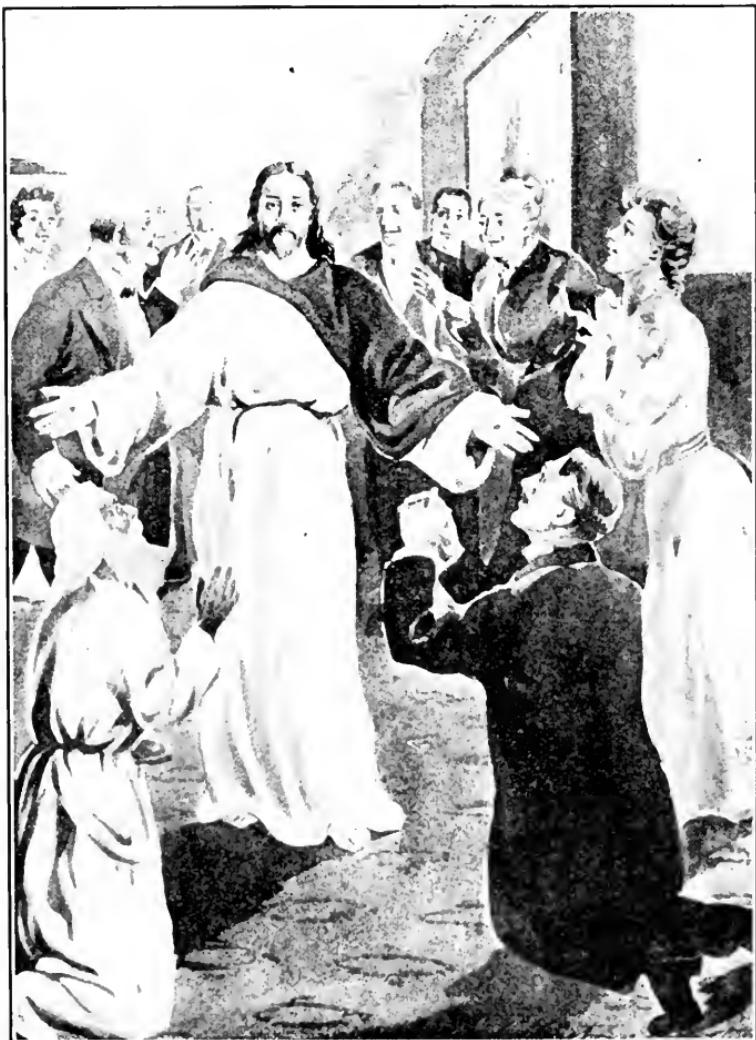
its appointed spokesman. Deacon Morgan prayed:

O Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth, thou gracious Head of the church, we abase ourselves before thee, beseeching thee to hear the cause of thy people. We are as sheep having no shepherd, and the wolves have preyed upon the scattered flock. Belial has usurped thy rightful place in the sanctuary, and hirelings have mocked thee in the pulpit, while Satan is the god of many. Brotherly love has waxed cold, prayer has been abandoned, thy Book is unread, and faith is dead. O Lord, how long? For Zion thou didst suffer and die; and yet, in thine own courts, thou hast been crucified afresh and put to an open shame.

Gracious Redeemer, a remnant of thine own, on bended knees, with longing hearts and weeping eyes implore thee to become our Pastor, whose own the sheep are. With one voice we entreat thee; we throw open every door as thou knockest; every heart welcomes thee; every will bows to thy rightful authority. We place on the altar of thy service our means, our bodies, and our souls, seeing thou hast bought us with thy precious blood; and we will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. We do solemnly pledge our sacred honor that, under the guidance of thy Spirit, we will purify thy house, reproduce Apostolic practice and methods, and, by divine grace, be faithful unto death.

Let the King hear us when we call; even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

The congregation sobbed, "Amen and amen."



Christ, the Good Shepherd, Takes Charge of His
Flock—Grand Avenue Church.

All remained kneeling, looking heavenward in reverential awe, awaiting the Shepherd's answer. As they waited and hoped, light crept into each face, a serene joy filled each heart, and great hot, loving tears flowed down many a cheek. The Lord had come.

The Master's presence suggested to the church the immediate necessity of complying with the Gospel plan in securing an under shepherd, who, by virtue of the Spirit's enduement, should interpret Jesus to them. All hearts, as if by one mighty celestial impulse, turned at once to John Ernest, a humble minister, well known indeed at Summit, the field of his abundant labors, but little known abroad, since he was wholly devoid of sensational methods.

When Mr. Ernest entered the pulpit on a beautiful morning in October, in answer to an official invitation to visit the field before forming a decision, a dark shadow fell over the proud congregation of Grand Avenue Church. He was not handsome, nor especially eloquent; but manly to the core. The fire of truth shone in his honest eyes. He spoke in a deep, musical tone, and in an easy, confident manner. It became straightway clear to all discerning minds that the pastor elect had but one master, and that was Christ. His studied plainness, his disregard of the tricks and tinsel of oratory, and his apparent indifference to the opin-

ions and criticisms of his wealthy and fashionable audience, created, at the very start, an unfavorable impression on the major part of his hearers. Even believers betrayed anxiety as to results, while Col. James was amused and Mason Saunders laughed.

The action of Grand Avenue Church in calling to its pastorate John Ernest, caused remark in every circle of Woodville society. Men stood at street corners, shaking their heads, gesticulating in weird earnestness; jangling voices indicated a division of sentiment. At late hours in saloons it was the one question that engaged the thought of the old tippler, or the embryo in strong drink. Clubs and lodges and churches were moved as never before by the calling of a minister to a Woodville charge. The circumstances were, indeed, peculiar. The most sensational church in the State had selected a pastor noted for none of the arts of oratory, without charms of *personnel*, a man emphatically spiritual and unsensational. There were knowing ones who prophesied that this radical change would damage the church not only socially and financially, but even religiously. It was generally admitted that a crisis had arisen, and all awaited the development of events, should John Ernest accept the call.

As soon as the result of his decision was announced, leading spirits in the James' faction met

in the vestibule for consultation; after a brief conference, they adjourned to one of the club-rooms to formulate a plan to thwart the action of the church. It had been noised abroad that John Ernest was instrumental in closing the saloons in Summit, his present pastorate; and it was generally believed, that if he came to Woodville, he would make war upon the liquor interests, and in all probability abolish the traffic. This would entail financial loss on many of the Grand Avenue folk, and business disaster on Col. James. After many expedients, such as writing anonymous menacing letters to Ernest and threatening to withdraw in a body fellowship from the church, had been proposed, yet none of them proving satisfactory, it was decided that the whole matter be intrusted to Col. James as having the largest interests at stake, and as being the fittest instrumentality to accomplish the desired end. The Colonel imbibed too freely of the sparkling old cognac, which was ever kept at the rooms to do its frightful service, and left the conclave for a quarter of the city which he was never known before to visit in the night.

Ernest spent Sabbath night at the home of Judge Castleberry, from which, without disturbing the family, he stepped out on the street at four-thirty in the morning, and hailed a trolley bound for the railroad station. He was stirring

at this unseasonable hour in order to meet a pressing engagement at his church in Summit. As might be expected, not many persons were traveling on a four-thirty car. In fact, besides the minister, there was but one passenger—a little oldish-looking girl with Jewish features, wrapped in a faded shawl. The clergyman asked, in a kindly voice, if she loved Jesus. She replied with decided Hebrew accent that she did not know him. The conversation was interrupted by the conductor, crying, "Fare, please!" The nickel paid, Ernest spoke tenderly to the conductor about his soul, and was just pushing back the door, to talk on the same theme with the motorman, when a terrific explosion shook the earth and wrenched the car from the track. Broken in twain, its severed ends were speedily enveloped in red tongues of fire, while fragments here and there had been sent whizzing through the murky air. John Ernest and the motorman were thrown on an embankment; so, barring sprains, bruises, and shocks, they were not seriously injured. Ernest staggered towards the burning wreck, calling to the conductor; who, having received the full force of the concussion, was instantly killed, and lay some distance from the track. He then seized a burning board, by whose light he made diligent search for the queer little girl. He called aloud with ever varying pathos, yet without re-

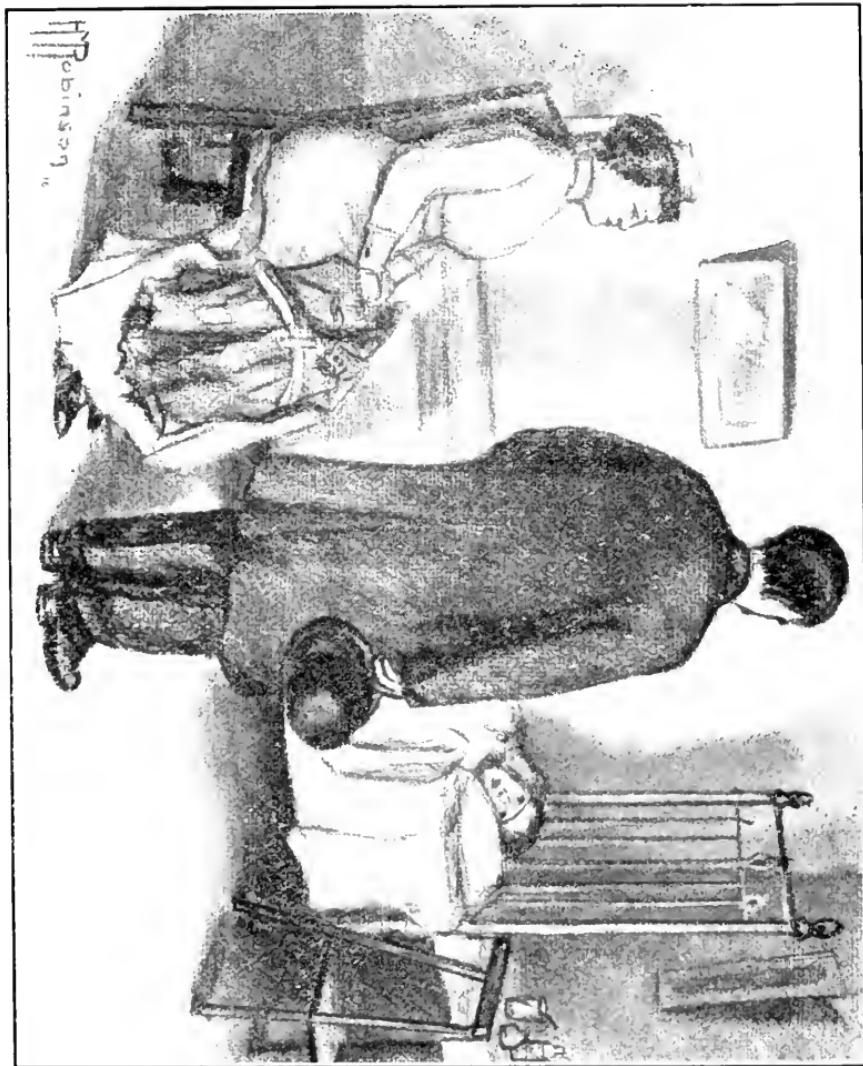


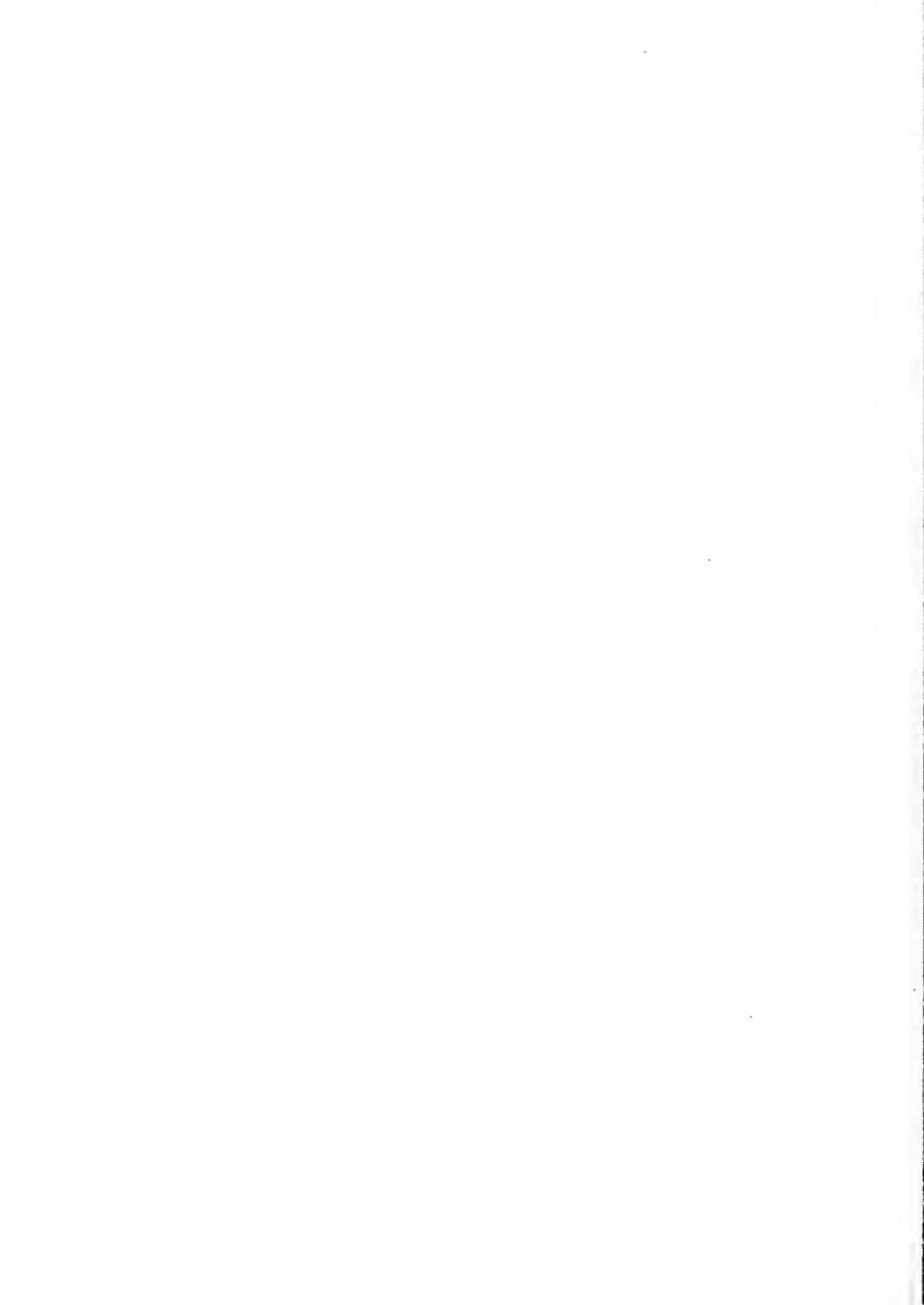
"A man, with a face like a demon, glared at him for a moment through the bushes, then disappeared into the darkness."

sponse, save as his own cries were echoed by a distant hill. Could she have been burned to death in the car? No; for he could see in the horrid glare of its blazing ruins that it was empty. He then crossed the track and called again, but still without answer. He put his hand to his ear and listened; he heard only his heart beating. It was a desolate section in the outskirts of the town, hence no help was obtainable. He went on a few yards, thinking he heard a faint groan not far away. He called again, waving his torch high in the air. He saw in the dim light the form of a man crouching in an undergrowth of shrubbery. The man stared at him for a moment, like a demon, and then disappeared in the darkness. Ernest recognized the face as one he had seen in the Sunday morning congregation. He did not know the name, but he was sure this savage-looking man was the finely habited gentleman who had seemed amused when he first entered the pulpit. He heard the escaped motorman crying the alarm in the distance, and then another groan back towards the wreck. There was no light now, save when here and there a dying ember would burst into yellow flame, and flickering for a moment, go out forever. A few gray streaks were beginning to appear in the east, but they did not as yet relieve the darkness. Another groan—and still another! As the minister hastened for-

ward, he descried dimly a dark object some paces before him, still groaning. His foot touched the body, a hand grasped his trousers convulsively, and a tiny voice tried to speak. The child was half unconscious and cold; she made an attempt to rise, but her strength failing, she fell back in a swoon upon the ground. Ernest took off his overcoat, wrapped it snugly around the shivering little waif, clasped her in his arms, and started down the trolley track in search of the City Hospital, which he knew was not far from Grand Avenue Church; for he had spent half an hour there Sunday afternoon, talking with a dying sinner. As he turned down Grand Avenue, he met an early scavenger whom he requested to take the girl in his cart to the hospital; but the man replied that it was his business to haul about a different sort of trash from that, and passed on. As the cart wheels slowly grated on the macadam, Ernest told the scavenger of Christ; and, his sprained ankle beginning to trouble him seriously, he limped along in agony, breathing quick, towards the hospital. He passed a house, as a gentleman was coming down its marble steps, elegantly dressed, a satchel in one hand and a gold-headed cane in the other; Ernest stopped a moment, laid his burden on a stepping-stone, looked back, and asked the gentleman if he could assist him to the hospital, telling him briefly of

"Is **You** Jesus?"





the disaster. The stranger, puckering his lips about his cigar, puffed two blue streams of smoke through his nose, without reply. It was Dr. Arlington. The limp child was again taken up, and at the next corner, the dome of the hospital came into view. An aged nurse met them at the door with a kindly smile, and led the way to a small room, where the child was laid on a comfortable bed. When her bruised head touched the pillow, her eyes opened; and gazing vacantly into her benefactor's face, and recognizing the passenger who had told her of a strange being, she whispered, "Is you Jesus?" The minister gave the nurse a bill, with the instruction to purchase some necessary clothing for his ward; and taking leave of the little patient, pressed tenderly her thin hand, asking her name; and she said, "Rooney,"

Having missed connection, and having to wait several hours for the next train, Ernest visited the scene of the accident. Many curious people had preceded him, while many as curious were following him. The timbers were still smoking: the dead conductor lay on his back, awaiting an inquest, face bathed in the morning light, a broken-hearted wife bending over him caressing his brow, as if life might return. Near the wreck lay a piece of the dynamite bomb, the argument of the assassin and the symbol of anarchy. The

prospect was weird;—in the blaze of civilization, under the shadow of the court-house, in sight of the city steeples, a crime that would have dis-honored darkest paganism. The preacher shud-dered; and this the field to which he had been called!

There was yet a spot to which he seemed drawn as by some strange charm. He penetrated the group of small trees in which he had seen the fierce-looking man just after the accident. Behold! there were the very tracks! he stood in them, the footprints of his would-be assassin, and with cheeks wet with tears, looking towards heaven, he prayed that God might forgive and save even this poor wretch! As he gazed in the direction the murderer had fled, he spied a shin-ing object suspended from a bending brier; eagerly hastening to it, he took it in his hand—a watch-key!

CHAPTER X.

THE NEW LORD'S SUPPER.

Having now settled with his Grand Avenue charge, at the first communion season, Mr. Ernest departed from the long-established custom of administering the memorial ordinance, saying he hoped the church would not object to a change in the service, since he felt sure the rite had lost most of its significance from current usage. "If Christ stood among you in the flesh, he would say, 'A new ordinance give I unto you,' yet it would be but the old made new. As ordinarily observed, it brings no comfort to the great mass of participants, leads to no real communion with Jesus, though this is its one great purpose, and produces no consecration of life; but it is taken under protest, is conceived as an unpleasant duty, and is classed among unprofitable and unmeaning acts."

Many had ceased to hold the Supper as a matter of vital importance, regarding it as a bone of contention between rival creeds, while not a few would willingly see it erased from the church worship. The ordinance had become a mere ap-

pendage of the morning service, participated in by persons whose breath was scented with beer, whose reputation for integrity was discounted on every corner of the street, and whose brain was still reeling from the wild mazes of a round dance. He said also: "In apostolic days, the church came together for the express purpose of breaking bread; and that there should be such a season now, when the atonement is exalted and the coming again of the Lord is made prominent. Did not the Master himself say through his inspired servant, that we should do this till he come, intimating that we should be mindful of his glorious appearing? Let us not lose sight of these things in the haste to get to our homes when we have already become tired in the preceding service. The great apostle taught us that we should not celebrate the Lord's Supper unworthily; hence, persons living in disobedience, setting un-holy examples, or engaged in dishonorable business, or persons divorced on any but Scriptural grounds, should not present themselves at the Lord's table."

The minister's words were as a peal of thunder in a clear sky. The people, already bewildered, were now dazed; their heads swam; and all were in doubt, saying, What meaneth this? The Lord's Supper had now taken on a new meaning; it was to become a vital force in the church life.

The pastor began worship by asking, with the directness and simplicity of a child, the Heavenly Father to remove all obstacles in the way of communion with his Son, and to give the Spirit to show all the worshipers the things of Christ. He then read, with all the music of a voice consecrated to the exaltation of Jesus, the old classic hymn relating to the atonement, beginning,

“Alas! and did my Saviour bleed
And did my Sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?”

A score of voices, tremulous with emotion, not waiting for the chorister to lead, caught up the familiar tune, filling the church with unwonted praise. This was quite a departure in Grand Avenue Church; but the effect was electrical, though the choir refused to sing at all. As the last notes of holy song died away, the minister read some of the prophecies concerning the sacrifice of the Messiah, followed by the Gospel narrative of his sufferings and of the institution of the supper, closing with Paul's statement of the ordinance in his first letter to the Corinthians. He stood on the floor of the church, in front of the pulpit, and spoke for about eight minutes, showing our need of a Saviour, his claims on us, and

urging the members to absolute surrender. He said that we have as real communion at the Lord's table with Jesus as the angels in heaven have: that it is not a form, nor a ceremony, nor a fictitious union, but a vital fellowship; that the Saviour was there in touch with all worshipers; heard them, saw them, knew them, loved them, blessed them. And as he pointed to the Son of Man as standing among them in his offices of Redeemer, Priest and King, the divine presence became so real, that many wept aloud, while the aged colored sexton hobbled up the aisle and fell down before the communion table, crying in exultation, "Dis is heben; de Master hab come, fur Chris' done toth me."

Rob Shandon, too, was the subject of an unusual impulse. The poor boy had been restored to church fellowship, and now thoroughly repentant, was so overpowered by a sense of the Lord's presence, that he shouted, "My Saviour! my precious Saviour!" as if he had seen the Christ.

The preacher concluded his remarks with an illustration drawn from the last scene in our Lord's preresurrection history. He said: "For an eternal lesson to men, God ordained that in connection with the death of his Son there should be three crosses on Calvary. On the central cross Christ was crucified; and there were two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and

the other on the left. These robbers were criminals of the vilest haunts and of the deepest dye, condemned by the laws of their own land. One of them looks into the face of the divine Sufferer, and believes; his trembling lips confess and pray. The Lord assures him of immediate salvation, promising to give him a home in the skies. The other, just as near the Master, with the same record, the same opportunities, railed on the Prince of Glory. He dies in his sins unforgiven. Thus the cross divided a saved man from an unsaved. And to-day the cross separates, according to faith, the husband and the wife, the parent and the child, the brother and the sister, and the dearest of friends. The cross has a right side and a wrong side. One insures life, the other death. On which side, my brethren, are you? I would say, and I think I have the Spirit of the Lord, that this table forms a line of clear demarkation between the church and the world. In my opinion," continued John Ernest slowly and feelingly, "no worldly members, including those who engage in the german, those who desecrate the Sabbath by travel or labor, those who read or issue Sunday papers, those who gamble for money or prizes or in futures, whether by progressive euchre, bridge whist, or in bucket-shops, those who patronize lotteries or who are dishonest in their trades, those who indulge in vicious habits or

slander others, and finally all who do not strive daily to lead Christian lives, should not participate in the Lord's Supper. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; then receive the sacred symbols of the Lord's broken body. Judge ye as men that must give account."

Mr. Ernest, after stating that any who did not wish to participate in the Supper, would find opportunity to retire during the singing, announced in tones of melting pathos the old favorite,

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be."

As a remnant of God's Zion rendered this stanza, with moistened eyes, nearly the entire congregation rose, and sinner and professing saint alike retired. Hundreds went away; hardly three score remained; nevertheless, the glory of the Lord rested upon his chosen, and Jesus moved in blessed ministry among those that were his. When Mr. Ernest finished blessing the bread, and pouring out his heart in thankfulness to God for his grace manifested in Christ, the Saviour's presence was so real, that Prof. Shimron started from his seat, repeating the Master's words, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all

that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." "What have I forsaken?" moaned he. "I am clinging to my old ways, fostering my old greed of gain, and instead of leaving all, I am striving unlawfully to get all. I'll take my stand on the right side of the cross to-day with the repentant thief;" and so saying, he went forward and laid on the Lord's table a lottery ticket, which he had drawn the day before, entitling him to the first cash prize of \$2,500. "I begin," Mr. Ernest, "by forsaking this prize; and I shall try from this hour to follow Christ."

Moved by the professor's conspicuous example, Mrs. Castleberry, whose worldliness had been so great a barrier to the happiness of her home and the spiritual interests of the church, advanced to the front, sobbing out, with streaming eyes, "I shall get on the right side of the cross, too." and taking from her pocket a deck of cards, which she always carried with her for the purpose of playing her favorite game of progressive euchre, she deposited the cards on the table, and forsook the life of the gambler.

It was now, the audience moved as by the breath of the Lord, that a youth haggard and solemn walked towards the pulpit, and suddenly turning round, faced the congregation. It was a traveling salesman. The stranger requested the privilege of saying a few words. "I have been,

he said, "sceptical and wayward. I have just finished serving a term in state's-prison. I came here this morning from sheer curiosity, though I had made up my mind never to enter a church again. My life seemed blighted and withered. I had lost faith in all Christians, even ministers. But Mr. Ernest has made the cross a reality. While he was preaching, I thought I saw Christ separating the goats from the sheep at the Judgment. I never had such thoughts before. I realized that I was lost. My heart is breaking over my sins. I have wronged my mother, I have betrayed innocence, I have spit on the Bible, and I have hated Jesus. Yet, Mr. Ernest says there is a place at the cross for repentant sinners, so I am going to hang up by the side of the saved thief. Oh! sweet cross! oh! blessed cross!" And great hot tears streamed down his wasted cheeks.

The effect of this communion service cannot be described. The oldest members had never witnessed anything like it. There was no elaborate sermon, no grand choral singing, but the real presence of Jesus.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

One Sabbath afternoon, John Ernest left the Sunday-school, in company with Judge Castleberry, whose home was a couple of blocks beyond the parsonage. The minister was troubled—the scene of the first service in Woodville returned. He recalled the strange face of the man that had mysteriously retired from the church, and that evil genius seemed to haunt him like a demon from the pit. And yet, was he sure it was the fiend that had stared at him on the awful night of the trolley disaster? Then, what was the motive of the crime? Was the individual, from some real or supposed wrong, wreaking vengeance on the Woodville Traction Company? Had he some grudge against either the conductor or the motorman, which he sought to expunge in this cowardly way? Was he aiming, for some unaccountable reason, at the life of Rooney, the little Jewish maid? It never occurred to him that a plot might have been formed to destroy John Ernest himself. While such unpleasant thoughts were flitting through his mind, Judge Castleberry

broke the silence; remarking that it must require quite an effort for a minister to become acquainted with the members of a large charge like Grand Avenue Church. Ernest now had the opportunity, he so much craved, of making an inquiry, without exciting suspicion.

"Yes," said he; "but I often, in a certain sense, get acquainted with people without meeting them, by asking about them. For instance, can you give me an introduction, though the party is absent, to the gentleman who suddenly left church during my first service here?"

The Judge reflected a moment, and replied, "I don't recall such a person just now; describe him."

"Well, he was of medium height, rather stout, clean-shaven, red face, small eyes, grizzled hair, a scar on the forehead."

"Why," exclaimed the Judge, "that's an exact description of Col. James. Don't you know the Colonel?"

"I think I have seen him a time or two; but I had never before heard his name. Who is he?"

"Why, he is a successful brewer, and —" here the lawyer paused— "a noted, or perhaps I should say, a notorious member of our church."

A tremor passed over the preacher's frame; and abruptly stopping, he looked down at the curbing.

"Are you sick, Mr. Ernest?" inquired Judge Castleberry, somewhat alarmed.

"Not sick, but perplexed;" and waiving his hand to the lawyer, he climbed the parsonage steps.

The shadows had grown long while he sat at his desk with his brow resting on his hand, his brain quivering like a guitar string when touched. The tea-bell rang, but he heard it not; a second time, longer and louder, but the succession of ghostly phantoms that surged through his brain refused to be interrupted; and it was only when Mrs. Ernest herself stood in the door of his study, that he appeared to regain perfect consciousness.

At tea, Mrs. Ernest, glancing at the care-worn features of her husband, said, "John, the day's work has told on you; let me give you more coffee; I know it is against your custom to take a second cup, but it will help you in the evening service."

With a vacant look of surprise, Ernest started up, observing mechanically that he had forgotten he had to preach in the evening.

"I have not given a single thought to my theme for the night, and it is now half past six o'clock."

"Never mind, John; you can hastily read your notes over, and the Spirit will give you utterance. Sometimes your extemporaneous discourses are your best. But pray, tell me, my husband dear, why you acted so queerly this morning when we

met that fashionably dressed gentleman near the corner of our street and the Avenue? Ever since, a dark shadow has been resting on you, and you have not been yourself at all. Now take this cup of hot coffee—just this bare half-cup, John;” handing him some old mocha, whose aroma filled the room.

“Well, Margaret, it is just this—and I had as well tell you now, though I have been striving to conceal it from you for the present. I believe I have spotted the man that wrecked the trolley.”

“Oh, Mr. Ernest!” exclaimed the wife in amazement and horror. “Who in the world can it be?”

“It may be best not to call names just at this time; but he is a member of Grand Avenue Church.”

“The dog! just think of it! But John,” added the good woman slowly and with a feeling of dread, “You can’t do anything; you only saw somebody in the dark, and of course you can’t be sure of his identity; so now drink your coffee, and let the matter drop.”

“As England’s bard would say, ‘To drop or not to drop, that is the question.’ Yet I am sure I am not mistaken.”

“But, John, do you think the community would accept your statement under the circumstances.

especially when there is so much ground for doubt?"

"Margaret, I have pondered all that; nevertheless, God saw the dynamite; he saw the burning car; he saw the dead conductor; and he now beholds the broken-hearted widow and the penniless orphans; and in his own way he will throw light on this fearful problem, for he hates crime."

"Then, why did God permit it?" asked Mrs. Ernest, starting a question of theology.

"It is the duty of the community to prevent crime; and the Deity permits what men won't prevent. Besides, Margaret, I believe our Heavenly Father intends to bring good out of this disaster. It is a wicked world that has to be instructed by dynamite, fire and death; but God has a sermon in this crime."

"And yet, dear husband, you know you are a Christian minister, and you —"

"Just stop a moment, my dear; I am also a Christian citizen. I sustain duties to the state as well as to the church. Society has been outraged by a deliberate and brutal murder. I am the only being, so far as I know, that can give evidence against the murderer. Is it possible for me to be either a good citizen or a good Christian and withhold that evidence? As a follower of Jesus, am I not pledged to do all in my power for the betterment and protection of society? If I

remain silent, do I not become a partner in this man's guilt?"

"But don't you think you owe something to the man as a member of your church?" said Mrs. Ernest, still endeavoring to solve the problem for her perplexed husband.

"Yes; the fact that I am his pastor, augments the difficulty; at the same time, however, it establishes a duty; and yet, upon reflection, I am constrained to think that the man was aiming at my own life; and is, therefore, my avowed enemy."

"Then," argued the minister's wife, with the intuition of a woman, "your first duty is that of a Christian to an enemy;" little thinking that her husband would discover a profounder meaning in her words than she herself had intended.

Abruptly rising from the table, he exclaimed with a smile, "I see the first step now; Christ will show me the next;" and he disappeared in the street. As he hastened on, he repeated over and over the Saviour's words, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." John Ernest knew no fear, save the fear of God; yet he perceived that this was the greatest trial of his ministry. He sped on and on towards Salisbury street, brain throbbing, heart beating, conscious that he had to face the monster that had sought to kill him in cold blood. He reached No. 86, and gave the

bell a nervous jerk. A servant responded, and bore the pastor's card to Col. James.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WATCH-KEY.

Mrs. James, richly bejeweled, entered the parlor, and requested the pastor please to excuse her husband, since, not feeling well, he had retired.

“Mrs. James, I must see the Colonel at once.”

“Can’t you leave a message, Mr. Ernest?”

“No, madam; I am sorry I cannot; but my business is imperative; and concerns your husband more than myself.”

“I am sure, sir, that my husband does not wish to see you this evening; and I think it would not be prudent to cross the Colonel so early in your ministry. You know, Mr. Ernest, that you are a raw hand on this field, and that there is some prejudice against you among our best people.”

“Mrs. James, my ministry will determine who are the best people; and I wish to talk on that subject with the Colonel at once.”

“Are you aware, Mr. Ernest, that the Colonel is our largest contributor, and if displeased, will cut down your wages?”

“Madam, speak not of money, when vital interests are at stake.”

"I shall ask Col. James again whether he can see you, sir," said she, leaving the parlor.

Mrs. James returned, saying coldly, "My husband desires to be excused; he does not wish to see company this evening; call again, please."

"Mrs. James, will you say to your husband for me, in all kindness, that I have not called as company, but on business that cannot be delayed; and as I shall be due at the church in a few minutes, I must see him immediately."

The woman becoming somewhat alarmed by the seriousness of the pastor, hastened away.

Col. James at length appeared, with nervous step and clouded brow; and yet with some affectation of pomp. John Ernest arose, extending his hand. The Colonel shrank back, as if to refuse this form of greeting, though finally he held out his hand mechanically. Both men took seats, facing each other.

"Col. James," said Ernest, "I have called on a matter of grave import, unpleasant alike to you and to me. The position is embarrassing, yet I want to be of assistance to you, if I can. The first thing, however, that I feel impelled to say is, that our Lord commands an aggrieved party to make known to the offender his fault privately, before further steps are taken. It pains me to say that you have been guilty of a grievous fault,

which I am sure your conscious guilt will at once define."

Col. James, with an air of offended innocence, retorted, "I think this is a very strange way to greet one of your members on first sight."

"Col. James, I have seen you before."

"Oh! I suppose you have seen me in the congregation; for I attend the Grand Avenue Church sometimes."

"If I mistake not, I have seen you when you were not at church."

"Well, perhaps you have; but you never met me before."

Said Ernest, "I think I have."

"Where, sir?" asked James with ill-controlled emotion.

"I saw you in a cluster of shrubbery near the wreck of the trolley. Don't you recall that night?"

"What do you mean, sir?" said Col. James, his face alternately flushed and pallid; and half rising, he continued, "I won't stand it! You have come on a peaceful Sabbath evening to provoke a difficulty in my own house, and to insult me in the bosom of my family."

"My dear sir," replied the pastor calmly, "I did not aim to anger or excite you, though my errand may have that effect. In the light of the Scriptures, I find it my duty to tell you your fault between you and me alone, and to urge you to re-

pent. I wish to say further, Col. James, that I am ready, from the depths of my heart, to forgive the wrong you have done me; and though you sought to destroy my life, I would be only too glad to do all in my power to save yours."

The brewer frowned, faltered, at length rose from his seat, and with the menace of a lion roared, "Retract that falsehood! Swallow that infamous slander! I give but ten seconds, coward!"

"We have, perhaps sir, different standards of courage; but we should both agree that a statement of fact is not falsehood, and that a true charge is not slander. As for seconds, eternity is mine."

"Then, sanctified craven, you will not retract?"

"No," replied the minister.

The brewer, in an explosion of rage, clinched his fist, thundering, "John Ernest, you lie!" then struck him in the face—and the blood followed the blow.

Ernest felt keenly this indignity, as any true man would; but he was too brave, too cool, and above all, too Christlike to resent the ravings of a criminal driven to desperation by the presentation of maddening facts. So he simply said, "Col. James, for Christ's sake, I bear that too."

The liquor dealer stared and raved. The preacher continued, "Now, my dear sir, I have told you your fault, I have expressed my willingness to

forgive, and could the matter rest here, I would rejoice. I have discharged my duty to you, but I owe also a duty to the State. Your crime must be divulged. I shall not prosecute you myself, but only make known to the officers of the law what I know about the trolley disaster and the murder committed thereby. As a good citizen, I can do no less."

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed the murderer, alarmed as well as exasperated, "that you are going to take this infamous slander that you have hatched up to the courts?" And his voice grew husky.

"Col. James," said Ernest calmly, "I advise you to confess the crime and to adjust yourself to the facts."

"What facts?" inquired the brewer in great confusion.

"The fact that you wrecked by means of dynamite the trolley car, and murdered its conductor."

Col. James was pale with rage, not unmixed with fear; his lips became blue, and quivered; his eyes glared; for a moment he paused. Should he slay his accuser and escape detection by a second murder? Should he flee? or should he stand trial in hope that the evidence of one man would not be sufficient to convict him, and in the further hope that his money would have due influence with the jury? He seemed, however, to prefer

to defy the law, and turning on his visitor, stormed in wrath, "John Ernest, I despise your threats, I spurn your charges, I deny your slanderous testimony; and, furthermore, I command you to leave this house on pain of death, and never to set your foot inside my door again."

"Very well, sir; but the day may come when you will welcome me under your roof. I entertain no ill-will towards you. I wish simply to help you; for the situation is grave."

"You mean, sir, that this baseless slander is grave."

"Col. James," said Ernest seriously, taking something from his vest pocket—"I hold in my hand a watch-key bearing your initials. This key was found where, with my own eyes, I saw you on the night of the trolley wreck. The jeweler has identified the key, bearing testimony that he engraved it for you eighteen months ago. Is that slander, Colonel?"

The brewer was dazed; he stood staring at his accuser; his eyes flashed a strange fire; his brows contracted; his color came and went; a cyclone of passion was brewing. His detection was now complete, and his ruin inevitable. The house that is built on the sand must fall; fortunes erected on fraud must crumble; the social standing of his family is clouded—and life itself is forfeited to the law. Final action must be taken; delay is

fatal. The storms rage within; the pent-up fires burn; desperation takes voice.

"John Ernest, I demand that key." And the air quivered.

"Colonel, I have no right to yield this key. It is the property of the court."

"Key or life, you ghost of a dog!"

As Mr. Ernest turned to leave, the infuriated brewer sprang at him with uplifted fist, and struck a blow that grazed the preacher's head. Ernest, in full vigor of splendid manhood, clasped his antagonist in his arms, holding him as in a vice of flesh. The Colonel squirmed, and raved, and swore; but he was as helpless as a babe in its mother's grip. The enraged man, seeing he had no further redress, burst into tears and cried like a child.

"Col. James," said Ernest in utmost tenderness, still holding him to his bosom, "be a man; make all possible amends, and tell the public the whole sad story. Make a clean breast of it. Confess, and be a man."

Saying this, he relaxed his grasp, gliding out into the darkness, and hastened to the church, relieved now that he had done all in his power to serve a man that had tried to kill him. He was conscious that he had never discharged an office so painful and humiliating before; yet he was also conscious that never in his ministry had he

felt an intenser glow of the Saviour's love than at this moment. When he drew near the church, he found an immense congregation awaiting him. He wiped the clotted blood from his face and rudely smoothed his tangled hair with his fingers before entering the pulpit.

The pastor preached with unwonted power. All hearts were moved that could be moved by the force of truth. God seemed to visit his people in a sweetly marvelous way. The sermon was just closing, when Col. James, under some overmastering emotion, rushed into the church; and, making directly for the pulpit, threw his arms around the minister and wept great hot tears. He sobbed out, "You have taught me what it is to be a Christian. My religion has been but pretence and hypocrisy. I was once convicted of sin; but I sat under a Christless Gospel, and the conviction was stifled. I here publicly confess that I aimed at your life, because I knew you would ruin my business if you came to Woodville. I was under the influence of strong drink when I placed dynamite on the track. The liquor men put me forward to do their work when I was, for the time being, really crazy. Mr. Ernest, forgive me and pray for me." And a thousand heads were bowed in prayer.

When a chorus of loud "amens" had endorsed the pastor's petition for God's richest pardon, Col.

James gave himself into the hands of an officer who was present.

That night John Ernest spent in a cell at the jail, in counsel and prayer.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TIE THAT BINDS.

John Ernest's preaching was taking effect in unexpected places and in unexpected ways. Woodville witnessed for the first time in its history Christianity applied to social conditions, so as to produce, in many instances, radical changes. Men were taught new modes of thought; trained to discriminate, forced to take sides. The issues were so clearly defined and involved such fundamental truths, that neutrality was impossible. One might love John Ernest, another might hate him, but none could be indifferent to him. To reduce his teachings to practice, was to revolutionize society, and persons of all shades of opinion were quick to recognize this fact. The pastor's sermons were felt in all the markets of the city, and were discussed in every shop and factory in which his congregation wrought. He held that the church ought to control public sentiment, or else stand as a perpetual testimony against it. All the customs of a community ought to conform to the laws of God, and all the morals of the people should be measured by the Gospel standard. It

was difficult for many members of Grand Avenue Church to accept this new conception of duty, though the pastor affirmed that it was two thousand years old.

Mr. Ernest was busy in the preparation of an address to be delivered before the Reform League of Woodville, when he received a note from Mrs. Stuart, the banker's wife, requesting him to call at once. The Stuarts were millionaires, living in the most palatial residence in the West End, and leaders of society. The preacher was ushered into a splendid parlor whose mirrored walls would have done honor to a king. Mr. and Mrs. Stuart entered, greeting their visitor coldly.

"Mr. Ernest," said the banker, "I have been a member of Grand Avenue congregation for twenty years; I have upheld the work of the church and the minister, but I feel aggrieved at some recent occurrences, and I think I have a just complaint against the pastor. My wife has been greatly disturbed by a remark you made in her presence at the last communion service. She has always been respected in our social circles; but, of late, she has been snubbed by the most influential members of Grand Avenue Church; and your untimely and unfortunate remark has been the source of all the trouble. We, therefore, have sent for you to see if the matter cannot be cleared up."

"Yes," added Mrs. Stuart, "we are both grievously offended. I think your remark was insulting and unkind. I have not slept for several nights."

The sympathetic pastor felt a keen pain at the thought of wounding others; so, turning to the banker, he said, "I regret that I have caused you the slightest distress; and, I assure you, it will give me the very greatest pleasure to make any amends possible. Please be kind enough to repeat the unhappy remark that has given rise to the difficulty."

"Well, sir, I was not present, but Mrs. Stuart understood you to say something about divorced persons not being entitled to the Lord's Supper."

"Unless Scripturally divorced, I said. But, my dear sir, what has that to do with you?"

"Why, of course, as a stranger here, you may not know it, but we have both been divorced from former alliances, on what we consider sufficient grounds, and our present union is a remarriage."

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Stuart, that you have dissolved the holy tie of marriage, thus trampling under your feet the sanctity of the home and the authority of God?"

"But, Mr. Ernest," interrupted the heiress of millions, "please consider our rank, and do not use such very offensive terms. You should remember that we are gentle folk, accustomed to

the refinements of life. Please select your language."

"Very well, madam; I shall select the language of the Son of God: 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.'

And there was silence.

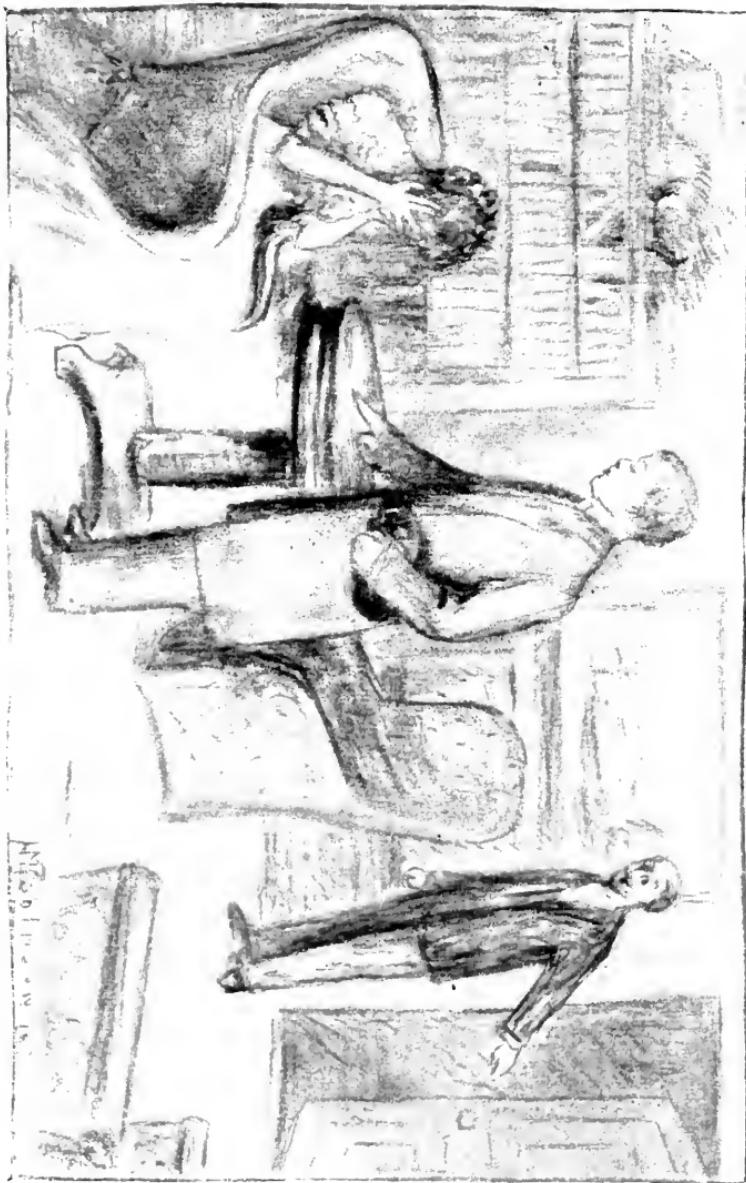
"But, Mr. Ernest," resumed the banker, "that was written a long time ago; and modern civilization requires us to take a broader view of this subject."

"You mean, then, that Jesus Christ is not authority on the question of divorce. This being true, you have discarded him as a divine guide, and are not his followers."

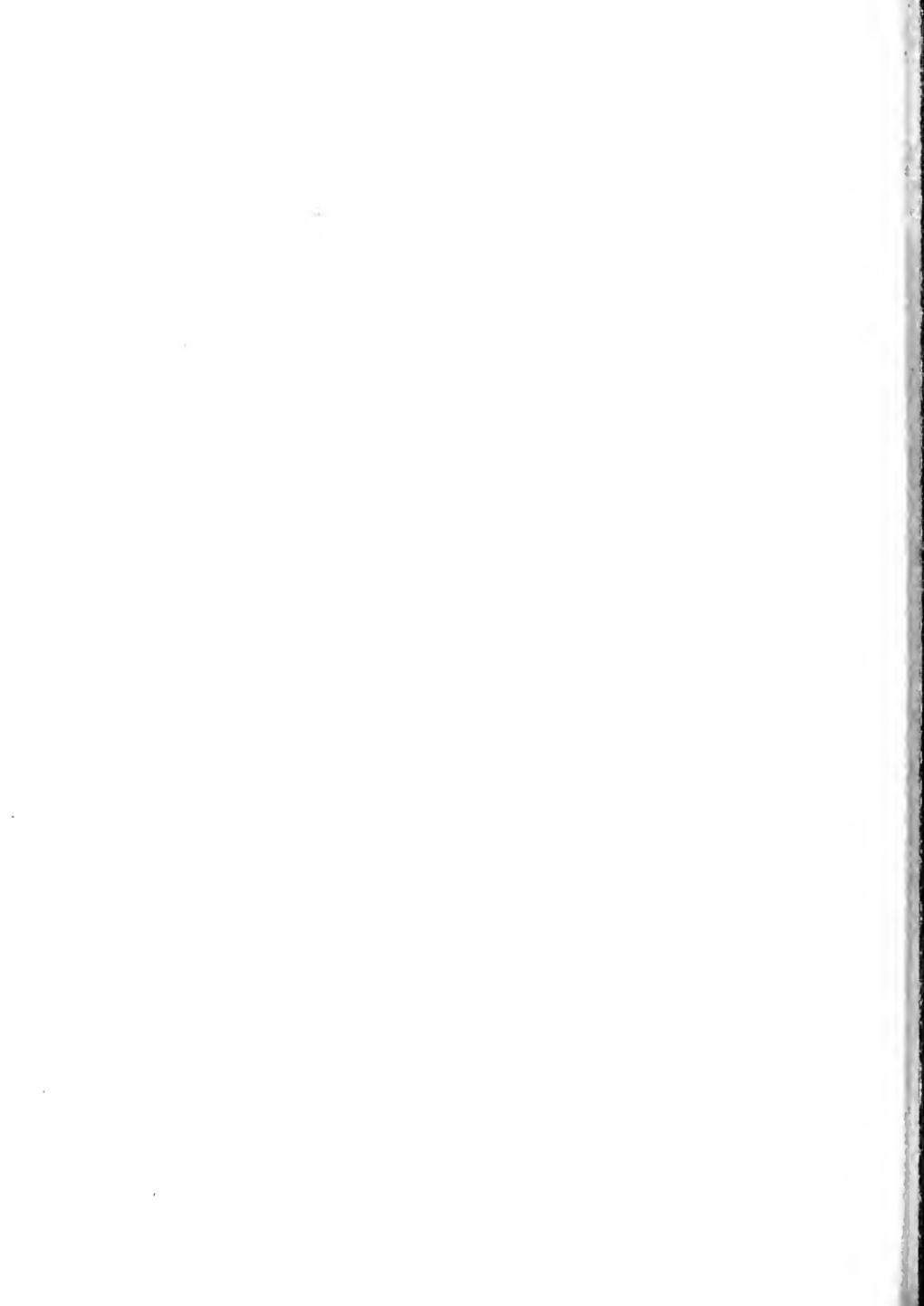
"Oh! Mr. Ernest, can you mean that we are not Christians, though we contribute to all good objects, and have been members of the church for so many years?" said Mrs. Stuart.

"Christians! why, you astonish me, Mrs. Stuart. The idea of a Christian repudiating the authority of Jesus Christ and living in open shame!"

Stuart's cheeks burned with rage; his eyes flashed fire; his frame shook. He arose from his chair, hesitated, stammered, and in a cyclone of wrath commanded the herald of the cross to leave his house forever. But Mrs. Stuart laid her



"Ernest, Leave my House Forever."



hand on the banker's arm, saying that Mr. Ernest must stay until the matter was settled. "Let me," said she, "talk with the pastor. Mr. Ernest, I have been spending nights in agony, since you made that remark. You have ostracized us from religious society; you have shut us out from the church; you have denied us a Christian character; and you have practically said, that the kingdom of heaven is shut upon us. Pray tell us, then, what hope is there for us either in this world or the next?"

"None!" said Ernest; and there was silence again.

At length the silence was broken by an outburst of weeping. Mrs. Stuart with swollen eyes, gazed into the calm face of John Ernest, whose look seemed so tender, whose words seemed so harsh. She unconsciously drew up her chair nearer the man of God, and still gazing intently into his face, she asked in broken accents, "Mr. Ernest, is there not any hope for us?"

And again he said, "None."

"But if we repent, Mr. Ernest, will not the Lord be gracious?"

"I never knew persons in your circumstances to repent," said the minister kindly.

"But I do repent, Mr. Ernest. I confess the wrong, and I am sorry I have broken the law of marriage."

"That is not repentance," urged the pastor. "Repentance involves turning away from sin, and that is a phase of the subject I fear you are not prepared for."

"My life is wretched in the light of the Bible as you preach it, Mr. Ernest; and my home has become a prison, and my existence a blank. I pray that you will advise me what to do." And the rich woman sobbed as if her heart would break.

John Ernest's sympathies were aroused, his warm heart overflowing; but, as he was in a delicate situation, requiring the utmost fidelity to the Saviour's law, he maintained the even tenor of his speech. He thought how hard it is to be perfectly faithful in the Christian ministry, how difficult not to be swayed by affecting circumstances. A burden rested on his very soul. He saw clearly what his sad message must now be; yet he was embarrassed as to the best method of breaking the truth to his erring members. He suggested to the banker that perhaps they were weary now, and, if they desired it, he would call again, after they had had time to reflect on what had already been discussed. "No," said Stuart; "I know that my wife is determined to have the matter out; and let's finish this unhappy conference forever."

"Then," said Ernest, and he choked—hot tears rolled down his cheeks—his voice trembled.

"Then," repeated the minister, "let us pray." Ernest knelt down; so did Mrs. Stuart; the banker merely bowed his head. The prayer was tender, short, pointed; it was a petition for forgiveness for the sin of the guilty union, for light, for help, for willingness to abide by the will of God. The preacher said, "Amen;" and a female voice sobbed, "Amen."

"Now," said Ernest in a low tone, "if you wish to enter the kingdom of heaven, you will have to leave all, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. His word is your law; obedience, the condition of eternal life. This union will have to be dissolved, this marriage declared void, this home broken up."

Stuart was not prepared for this, and shouted in delirious excitement, that he would die first.

Mrs. Stuart swooned in her rocker, gasping, "God help me! God—." Her eyes closed, her lips quivered, her cheeks were pallid. Ernest felt chill and sick—oh, the agony of being faithful, the crucifixion of being true! After some moments of painful silence, Mrs. Stuart regained her consciousness, and a degree of strength, understanding what Mr. Ernest meant by the Christianity of Christ. She had been a member of Grand Avenue Church for years, and yet, never realized till now that she was a criminal in the sight of God. Little did she expect this marvelous revelation of her in-

most soul, when that morning she proudly summoned John Ernest to retract his far-reaching words; and, in her own case, she found verified that deep saying of Scripture, "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." A revolution had taken place in this woman's inner life, a ray of heaven's own light had shot into her darkened being, and for the first time in her history, she *believed*. For a moment, she stood before the minister transfixed; then suddenly breathing deeply, she calmly said, "Mr. Ernest, I will follow, I will follow the Lamb."

The banker, having at length discovered the radical trend of the pastor's conversation, awoke from his torpor; and after threatening the minister with the law, he raged, and swore, and, in the fury of his wrath, stamped his foot on the floor and banged the door upon the preacher. But a soul had been saved; and the man of God returned to his study.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when a close carriage stopped in front of the banker's residence. Mrs. Stuart looked for the last time upon those mirrored walls and that fretted ceiling, hesitating to take the step that was now in-

evitable. She was to bid farewell to fortune and to social ties; she was to forsake houses and lands and husband and friends, and pleasures, and luxury—all that she had—for the Son of Man's sake; she was to sink into obscurity in the eyes of society, deflowered and ostracised—but she was to inherit eternal life, and win a home in light. Her cheeks flushed, her lips trembled, her eyes filled with burning tears. With the resolution of a soul illuminated by the Spirit of God, she approached Mr. Stuart; he was sitting in an arm-chair, his head resting heavily on his hand; he did not observe her. With forced composure she said, "Mr. Stuart!"

The banker stood and faced her; then passionately exclaiming, "My darling wife!" stretched forth his arms to press her to his bosom; but she drew back and said, "Mr. Stuart, I am no longer your wife, for our union is dissolved in obedience to the law of Christ." And taking from her finger a superb solitaire diamond, which she placed in Stuart's hand, she added, "I return to you this marriage ring. Good-bye!"

With a ten months' babe in her arms, Mrs. Stuart descended those marble steps, never to enter that princely mansion again.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REALISTIC ART GALLERY.

No institution in Woodville was attracting more attention than the Realistic Art Gallery. It was founded by Mr. Stuart, the banker, at great expense, and was designed to be a sort of modernized Grove of Daphne. The millionaire was a lover of the fine arts; yet, unfortunately, his tastes, as in the case of so many artists, were not chaste; for he admired the soiled in art rather than the clean. He had purchased for the Gallery a number of paintings and statues that were offensive to all persons whose sensibilities had not been perverted, or, as Mr. Ernest said in his evening sermon, "The specimens introduced do not appeal to the sublime in man, but to the slime; not to the best in us, but to the beast in us." The preacher also made bold to declare truths that stirred the hearts of Grand Avenue saints, saying: "Woodville society is veneered, the form of Christianity in its churches is too weak a type to cope with the ever increasing strength and opposition of the world. The church has fairly ceased to mold the beliefs of mankind. The saloon has

more influence in elections than the sanctuary; the police, more than the preachers; and the newspapers more than the Bible. The society of the city is still pagan; besotted men and nude women parade our streets; brownstone palaces are but temples of gambling; magnificent parks are scenes of nightly revels; while splendid club-houses witness nameless orgies that would cause a cannibal to blush. And if I may be more specific, there is not a blacker spot in all heathendom than the Realistic Art Gallery, nor is there among any benighted people of the globe a more shameless crime than is there committed this Sabbath night in the name of religion. Sodom was vile, Capernaum worse, but Woodville worst."

John Ernest knew not the full force of his words. He had taught the flock high ideals, had created lofty sentiments, and had awakened Christly aspirations. Under the spell of his philippic against the Art Gallery, the major part of the congregation remained after service to discuss ways and means of relieving the community of this cancer upon its civilization.

Just as their deliberations were waxing warmest, a night-watchman rushed into the church, inquiring for Mr. Ernest. His hair was tousled, his manner excited, and his speech confused. He reported that one of the city's roughs had committed an assault upon a well-known society belle,

who had just been posing at the Realistic Art Gallery as Venus. A prize had been offered by Mr. Stuart to the young lady, who, at the close of the evening sacred concert, should expose the "most perfect bust." A score of lasses contended for the prize, vying with one another in the art of dressing with fewest materials. The damsels who was declared the goddess of beauty, and the possessor of the most exquisite "human form divine," was the occasion of the crime, having awakened sleeping amours in the bosom of a disciple of realism. The sinning youth had been captured by the officers of the law, who in turn had been overpowered by an angry mob. A lynching was imminent; and the watchman knew no one who could have any influence with the rabble, save Mr. Ernest. Then the custodian of the city's weal disappeared, followed by the preacher and the male portion of the congregation. Happily, the minister met the infuriated mob, as it was dragging its victim to an electric-light pole for execution. Standing on a stepping stone he easily arrested the attention of the scowling crowd.

"Fellow citizens," said he, reaching forth his hand to still the restless throng, "let me speak a few words to you before you hang this man."

"Who in thunder is that fellow?" shouted a dozen voices.

"That's preacher John Ernest," yelled others.

"Well, a man like him can speak at any time. Tell us about it, parson."

"Be not hasty to avenge the great wrong the community has suffered; a rash deed will react. As good citizens, you cannot take the law into your own hands; but must entrust your grievances to the courts. Your cause is just; so should your methods be."

"But our courts are corrupt," said one.

"Then hang the judges, if any lynching must be done."

"The trouble is with the juries; they can be bribed," added another.

"Then hang the jurors," insisted Ernest.

"It's the lawyers that clear the guilty, pack the juries, and render the whole judicial system a farce," argued a third.

"Then hang the lawyers."

"We'll hang *them* next time, parson; this fellow must swing to-night. Better put up your best *pra'r fur 'im*; fur if anybody kin git 'im through the gates, you kin."

"No; you can't hang this man; no doubt, he deserves it, but he must have a fair trial. Hand him over to the authorities and hang the attorney that tries to thwart the ends of justice."

"Sump'n in that!" exclaimed a man in the crowd.

Others shouted, "Lynch him! lynch him!"

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Ernest, "it is a privilege due the prisoner that he be allowed to make his own statement of the crime. Let him speak for himself."

"Ladies and gentlemen :" began the victim.

"Thar ain't no ladies here, you fool," observed a bystander.

"An' I'm er feard thar ain't no gentlemen," added a wit in an undertone.

"I dropped in," continued the criminal, "at the Realistic Art Gallery to see them women what wuz advertised in the papers to play the goddess. So, after a while, a dozen or so goddesses half naked, if not mo', pranced about on the platform actin' Venus. Then, last of all, came another goddess, very handsome, and her body exposed. At once my lower nature wuz aroused; I took the goddess to be one of the 'girls,' and thought she would not object to receiving the prayers of a mortal like me. So I followed her through the streets into the suburbs of the city, until she was passing a little thicket of pine-trees, and there I sought to pay my worship to Venus. Gentlemen, a naked goddess will ruin a town; an' clothes will protect a woman more'n pistols."

"Now, fellow citizens," said Mr. Ernest, "any woman that exposes her person to the public, is a danger to the morals of the community. A bad woman is as bad as a bad man; and if this man

is to be killed, you should seize the brazen woman that shamelessly instigated the crime, and let them both hang from the same limb."

"That's right—hit 'em' agin'!" And the welkin rang with cheers.

"But don't hang either," resumed the minister; simply swear out warrants against both parties, and see that an honest jury and a competent judge determine the merits of the case."

The fierce multitude, after some hesitation and difference of opinion, resolved to take Mr. Ernest's advice.

To the consternation of Woodville, one of her reigning belles was tried for wantonness, and fined five hundred dollars. The libertine, on a charge of assault, was sentenced, in view of mitigating circumstances, to five years' hard work in the penitentiary.

Meantime the ladies of the church had not been idle. After the night-watchman had narrated the harrowing story of the sacred concert with its tragic results, and the men had rushed forth to prevent a lynching, the good women of Grand Avenue formed in a body, and marched in solemn defile to the Realistic Art Gallery, the immediate cause of all the shame and crime of that holy Sabbath night. Having awaked the janitor, they effected an entrance into that temple of malodorous fame; and under the flash of electric lights,

they beheld a civilized Sodom. Many of them never knew that in the very center of Woodville there was such a hotbed of vice—that under the shadows of a church of Christ there was a synagogue of Satan. Here stood in captivating splendor the enemy of all virtue and the menace of every home. Here was hell in stone and wax and paint. These daughters of God for a moment remained silent; they gazed upon nude pictures, mainly of their own sex, they beheld statues in bronze, marble, stone and wax, displaying the shame of both sexes. A wave of mingled sorrow and indignation swept through their troubled minds, as with bowed head they smote upon their breasts and wept.

At length, Mrs. Charles Kent broke the silence by saying, "Ladies, this place has to-night been the scene of shame and the cause of crime. As you look upon these splendid creations of art, you witness womanhood degraded. These hideous objects are the property of Mr. Stuart; but, bear in mind, virtue and modesty are the property of women. If Mr. Stuart can destroy the character of woman, her highest possession, is it a crime to demolish the instruments he uses to accomplish his fiendish purpose?"

"Moreover," answered Mrs. John Morgan, "our pastor said recently that nothing is of value to a community that degrades it. It is true, Mr.

Stuart defended his exhibits on the ground that they were simply realistic, 'true to nature's heart,' as he expressed it. Besides, he claimed that the nude paintings and sculptured busts were not more exposed than the ladies of Woodville often were in their ball costumes; but we all know that one disgrace does not justify another."

Moved by these ringing words, Corinne Howard seized some pigment tubes that had been deposited in the art studio by a class of girls who received daily lessons from a realistic professor. The tubes were vigorously applied to the nude pictures by these sober dames, who in one brief half hour destroyed the masterpieces of the institution by covering forever their shame with a daub of paint. At the same time, Mrs. Castleberry, with a contingent of kindred spirits, set to work to demolish the indecent statues in bronze, marble and wax, by pushing them from their pedestals with a mighty crash, which left the Art Gallery a desolation of bacchanalian memories.

The iconoclasts had scarcely quit the building, when the chief of police stood amid the magnificent wreck, recalling the fact that these noble women had petitioned both the legislature and the town aldermen to remove the objectionable features from the Art Gallery, on the ground that they degraded womanhood and fostered vice, yet without redress. He further recognized the truth,

made now impressive, that the authorities had winked at wickedness in high places, and to arrest these female crusaders would involve Woodville in a civil war. So, realizing that discretion is the better part of valor, the officer, grasping in one sweep of his astonished vision the costly ruins of the temple of Bacchus, remarked with the penetration of a philosopher: "What fools these women be!"

CHAPTER XV.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

After the prayer service, Mr. Ernest called on a poor family that had been thrown out of employment by the suspension of a factory. It was in the foreign section of the town, and the family was of Hungarian stock. The streets were narrow and dark and filthy. At every corner there was either a gambling dive or a saloon, often both united in one. Rowdies of both sexes swaggered along the alleys; drunken carousals were heard on every block; paganism reigned in almost every home. Christianity had made no perceptible impression on this dark quarter. Jehovah was here practically an unknown God. The preacher could not help betraying emotion, and pausing in the midst of a besotted, filthy, criminal and Christless humanity, he bared his head, and turning his eyes upon the stars, he spoke with God. He gave some money to the destitute Hungarians, thus making one wretched, despairing family happy; but "what was that among so many?" He did not know it—and often we do not know the good we do—but God had already

made him the means of planting the Gospel in this benighted district. He walked on half a block when he heard a voice that was strangely sweet. He stopped again. Some one was singing in the attic of a tenement house, it seemed—so faint were the notes—so far away. He placed his hand to his ear as if to catch but a word from the song. It was a hymn—“Rock of Ages”—there was a fascination about the voice he could not resist. Who, thought he, can be singing a hymn in this sink of iniquity? Can it be the Rock of Ages himself, descended from the sky to do what Christians have so long refused to do? Can it be some soul, lately born to God, giving expression to its budding faith? Can it be some humble missionary seeking to save some lost sinner in this godless tenement house? How his own soul burned to speak just one word for Christ before leaving that awful spot! Just as he was reflecting, praying the Father to open a door in that section to him, a rough young fellow stopped near him, saying, “Hello, cap’n, is you er goin’ up to hear that singin’?”

“What singing?” asked Ernest.

“Why, thar’s a woman up here what kin squall like er angel. Jes foller me, an’ I’ll take you up thar. They likes folks to come to the singin’.”

Ernest followed up a labyrinth of stairs, smiling as he conceived an angel squalling. The notes

grew more distinct as he wound his way upward. This mistress of song, whoever she was, was now ringing out the last stanza of "Rock of Ages." He pulled his hat down over his eyes, turned up his coat collar, and on entering the attic, took a seat some distance from the tallow candle which furnished the light. He was taken for a street loafer, who had come from curiosity to hear the singing, which had begun to attract some attention on the block on which the flats were located. A woman was standing near the attic window, dressed in black, with a veil covering half her face. She seemed to be oblivious of the presence of her auditors. She was repeating:

"When mine eyelids close in death,"—her face turned towards heaven—her eyes shut. Then:

"When I rise to worlds unknown,"—her face radiant with joy.

"See thee on thy judgment throne,"—she frowned, then smiled. Then, with all the richness of a cultured voice, and all the pathos of a chastened soul, she sang:

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

And for a moment she was silent, as if hid in God.

At length she told the story of her conversion, stating that she had lived in luxury; that she had

preferred sin to Christ; but by God's grace she had been led to understand the Saviour's will, and had abandoned all for him, having but one desire—and that—the saving of the lost.

Then John Ernest knew that it was Mrs. Stuart.

The dark, dingy little attic was nearly full of persons, now and then some outcast coming in to take a vacant seat. The preacher had never seen a harder-looking set of people. In body, they resembled the lower animals; in mind, they were "earthly, sensual, devilish." Ignorance reigned in undisputed sovereignty, heathen superstition dwarfed the lives of the people, while all the fearful elements of blackest anarchy surged in the undercurrents of their thought. The scene was weird; the prospect poor; the mark of the beast unmistakable. Ernest shuddered and prayed. His heart ached as he thought of the Christless throngs of purgatory. No upholstered furniture was here, but only boxes and barrels and a few benches rudely made by laying undressed planks on wood-horses borrowed from a carpenter's shop. The motley crowd, most of it with patched clothing and unkempt hair, was in keeping with the furniture. The solitary dirty tallow candle was fixed in the mouth of a beer bottle, which stood on a shelf. As John Ernest looked upon the strange folk who had left haunts of vice, homes of poverty

and suffering ; sinning, Christless humanity, swept into silence and enthusiasm by the power of consecrated song, he wondered that so many Christians, though possessing the gift of melody, use their power to so little purpose ; and he could but quake when he thought of splendid churches whose congregations are wickedly dumb when the name of God is praised.

When Mrs. Stuart, whom we shall continue to know, for the sake of convenience, by that name, closed the hymn-book, that audience of social outcasts was leaning forward, mouths open, eyes staring, in the awful stillness of death. She was singing nothing new, only the hymns of Jesus and his love—hymns all have heard from childhood—but the secret lay in the fact that the voice was but speaking the language of a heart broken on the altar of faith. She was exercising power no one knew she had. Her magnificent voice hitherto had charmed social gatherings in Grand Avenue Church, but only as an entertainment ; now that mighty instrument of proclaiming the Gospel was breaking the chains that bound unbelieving souls. A frivolous, worldly, sinful woman of fashion and wealth, had for Christ's sake become poor, had surrendered all that the world holds dear ; and by divine grace had been transformed into a slum missionary.

Mrs. Stuart said she had been led into this

work in a very strange way. Her pastor had presented the religion of Jesus in a light she had never seen. He pointed out that our duty to Christ is first, and that, if necessary, we must leave all, even home and friends, to follow him. He showed me that sin is death, that duty is life. "My heart is dead," said she, "except to Christ; I have but one desire, the salvation of the lost." Then, lifting up one hand, as if pointing to the throne, she pleaded, her face suffused with tears, "O sinning men and women, boys and girls, will you let Jesus save you now? Think of his love, the blood he shed for lost ones like you; look up yonder!" And as one man, that melted throng of sin and shame turned their eyes upward. "Yonder is Jesus, reaching out his hand to take your burdens, saying to each troubled and sinning soul, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Is there one here who will leave all and follow Jesus?" She paused, while a strange solemnity rested on even the most callous hearts. Jesus had come into the attic, fulfilling his promise, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there will he be in the midst of them. A child issued from the back of the audience—a little oldish, tallow-faced girl, with Jewish features. Drawing her faded shawl about her thin body, she stood up to bear testimony to the Sav-

iour's love. She said in a low, but distinct voice: "A few months ago, my parents, who are Hebrew people, got to quarrelling one Sunday night about being poor, and having so many children that they could not take care of them; so they told me, as I was weakly and couldn't work, to leave home and do the best I could. They told me I had better go and get into a home; for I never would be any account to earn a living. I lay awake and cried all night, till my father told me it was time to be going. The night seemed so dark. My oldest brother took my bundle to the trolley for me and said, if he ever got able, he would come and take me from the orphanage, and give me a place. I had been on the car but a little while, when that terrible accident took place, and I was nearly killed. A gentleman on the car had told me something about Jesus, and after the accident, he took me to the City Hospital, where I was given a New Testament, which told me all about Jesus. My mother had taught me a little about Moses, but nothing about Jesus. As I read this new book, a great change came over me. Somehow, whenever I read a chapter in the book, I thought about the kind gentleman who saved me, and the way he talked, I felt the book must have made him good. And I thought I would give anything if I could be good. And I have said my prayers ever since. And just now when this lady said Jesus was

reaching down to take our burdens, I gave him mine, and I haven't any more burden now."

The plaintive story of the Jewish girl had done its work; and older hearts were touched by her simple testimony. But none was moved more than John Ernest. His hat still covered his face partially, and his coat collar was standing. This did not excite comment, since most of the men did not remove their head-wear. Mrs. Stuart, not recognizing him, but perceiving his emotion, approached him, asking, "Don't you think you ought to be a Christian?"

"Yes," said Ernest.

"Are you willing to accept Jesus as your Saviour?"

"Yes."

"Have you repented, you think?"

"Yes."

"Are you willing to give up all your sins?"

"Yes," said Ernest.

"Will you give us a testimony for Jesus now?"

Ernest went forward, taking off his hat and adjusting his collar. He said, "It is a pleasure to be here, and to see the power of the Lord's grace. This good woman has asked me to give my testimony to God's ability to help men. I cannot do better than to relate the experience of a man I know. It was Si Jones. Si lived in the slums of a certain town, tried to poison his mother when

he was twelve, shot three men in drunken broils later in life, was convicted of half a dozen robberies, wore numerous scars he had received in street fights, talked in oaths, and acted in lies. He had been a jailbird from a lad, and at length was sentenced to be hanged for a great crime. I visited the man in prison. He was so vicious that he was chained in an arm-chair to restrain him from violence in the jail. When I first spoke to him, he cursed me, and raved like a maniac. He had never been in a house of worship, hence knew practically nothing of Christ. I said one day, 'Si Jones, would you like to go to heaven?' Then, glaring at me more like a demon than a man, he mumbled, 'Stranger, don't try that stuff on me. I've got to die, and I don't want any foolishness.' Said I, 'Si, where are you going when you die?' He rattled his chains and frowned. Again I asked, 'Si, where are you going?' He looked wild, and staring at me replied, 'Stranger, there ain't but one place for a feller like me to go.' 'But Si, suppose God should come into this prison, and say, 'Si Jones, if you believe, I'll take you to heaven; what would you do?' 'Let him say it, first,' said Mr. Jones, listlessly. I drew a Testament from my pocket and read the story of the Philippian jailer; and when I came to Paul's answer to the prison-keeper and read slowly, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be

saved,' he raised his head and asked, 'Did God mean that?' 'Oh, yes;' said I; 'and he means that if you now trust Jesus; give your heart fully to him; and confess him right here in this cell, you will be at once saved.' The criminal seemed to be thinking; compressed his lips; and after a silence of some moments, said, 'I believe!' and the bad man shook like an aspen leaf. By the aid of some influential men, I succeeded in getting Jones' sentence commuted to a term in the penitentiary. In six weeks, Si Jones had read the Testament through, and with the knowledge thus gained, had been instrumental in saving eleven of his fellow-convicts. His term was shortened because of his excellent conduct, and upon his return home, he became a kind husband and father, and one of the best mission workers I ever knew."

A voice here interrupted the speaker: "Say, mister, I knowed Si Jones. Is he livin' yit?"

"Yes," said Ernest.

"Well, I knowed him. And I was one of the boys he read that Scriptur to. And if you ain't ashamed of sich cases as Si Jones, may be, you won't be ashamed of me. Will you, cap'n?"

"No," said Ernest. "I love men like you."

"And stranger," said the lank, rough, ill-clad man, a fair specimen of the slums of Woodville, "somehow, I likes you too. So you say religion made a man of Si Jones, that cussin' Si Jones?"

"Yes; religion will make a man of any man that has it."

"Well, do you think it could do any thing for a feller that ain't got no home, and no money, and no credit, and ain't been out of the penitentiary but three weeks?"

"Yes," said Ernest; "Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. The only qualification for salvation is sin, and a decision by God's help to abandon it."

"Well, I've got a plenty of that."

"Will you here, in the presence of this audience, confess your sin, and trust Jesus to save you from it?"

"I'll do it;" said the man, and dropped back into his seat.

As Ernest turned his face towards the tallow candle, his features became better defined, and a little figure sprang forward; and stood holding his hand, and looking up into his face. It was a little Hebrew waif, named Rooney.

Mrs. Stuart sang,

"Oh, where shall I spend eternity?"

As she dwelt on that word "eternity," the tears gushed from her eyes. When she finished the third stanza, the song closed, the slum men wept, the tallow candle flickered and went out. This was the beginning of Woodville's revival day.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUT OF A JOB.

In the course of a sermon, John Ernest said, "The church is responsible for the slum; our congregation, though possessing such vast resources, has, unconsciously perhaps, yet really, refused its sympathy to the unfortunate element in the community. Men commit crime, and you abuse them without trying to help them. Society is made up largely of spiritual cannibals, preying upon the unfortunate classes, who toil and starve and die hopeless and helpless."

While these remarks caused a ripple of sensation in the fashionable circles of Grand Avenue church, yet their truth was abundantly attested by the annals of the poor. And it was but the week following the sermon, that a gruesome instance occurred in Woodville to give additional force to the preacher's words.

A widowed mother, with five children, one of them sick, was dependent on a son, some sixteen years of age, for support. The boy had been thrown out of work by the closing of the factory in which he was employed. The shut-down was

due to the order of a powerful trust company, whose object was to raise the price of their goods by decreasing the supply on the market. Five hundred hands, dependent on their work for their living, were suddenly deprived of the means of supporting their families, and thrust upon the community, a restless, roaming, dangerous mass of sufferers. Readily might they be moulded by an anarchist leader; naturally would they be arrayed against capital and Christ, for the president of the company was both a capitalist and a "Christian." After many failures, Tom Sedgwick applied for a job in the office of a well-to-do business man, who was a prominent member of a Woodville church.

As the lad entered the office, his heart sank, and speech failed him. He had never seen such magnificent furnishings and such glorious ease before. He stood in dumb amazement, gazing at the splendid walls aflame with gilt paper. How he would like to be the errand boy for such an establishment! The gentleman turned around from his desk, and said in a rough voice, "What will you have?"

"I have just seen your advertisement in the 'Echo' that you need a messenger boy. If you think I could suit you, I would like to have the place, sir."

The broker looked at him with such complete

indifference, that the lad felt chilled to his very marrow.

The "Christian" at length replied heartlessly, "You look like rather a shabby youth, and I don't think you would suit me."

Tom colored; for though poor, he was still human. "Yes, sir;" said he; "my clothes look worse to-day than they generally do, because ever since the trolley accident that caused father's death, I have had to support mother and my brothers and sisters. Mother had such a bad headache last night that I did not ask her to patch my jacket; so I did it myself. Oh! sir, mother has to scuffle awful hard! And, then, lately the medicine bill for baby has been so heavy; so you see, sir, I can't wear the best clothes."

"Where do you live?" inquired the broker.

"I live down on Gourd Vine alley."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the "Christian," with a sneer. "That's the section where all the vermin in the city congregate."

"Yes, sir; and mother would like to move into a better street, if only we could get a little start."

"Well, my young man, I don't suppose you will be likely to get a position in this part of the city."

"But, sir, I have good recommendations from some nice people. Here is one from the superintendent of the factory, and another from the foreman; would you like to read them, sir?" "No,"



"Whiskey or Crackers?"

said the broker with a snarl; "you had better apply elsewhere. Good afternoon."

A fearful gloom settled upon Tom's face as he left the office. His heart sank when he thought how his mother would feel if he came home without a job. He remembered his brothers and sisters in their rags—he recalled the sick babe. His father was dead, and Tom wished he were too. He was passing a saloon. The bright lights had just been turned on. He felt weak, weak because hopeless. He stopped. The lights were so cheerful. An impulse to go in seized him. He reached his hand into his pocket and took out a nickel. He had promised before leaving home to buy the baby some crackers with it. He looked at the coin in the light that streamed through the saloon window. It was the only money he had been able to save from his earnings at the factory. Tom had never taken a drink, but he had heard men say that whiskey gives strength and drowns trouble. He was weak and in trouble. He had had no food since early breakfast. A toddy might help him. Drink or crackers, that is the question. He heard merry laughter; he heard the gay notes of the banjo. Whiskey or crackers. As he stood debating this question with himself, a line of men all the while passing into and out of the saloon, the "Christian" broker halted by his side; and eyeing him closely, said in a sharp tone, "Are you not

the youngster that came to my office an hour ago hunting a job?"

"Yes, sir;" said Tom, trembling with the hope that the gentleman might now have an offer for him.

"It seems that you don't want a job so much as a drink."

"Oh! no, sir; I never took a drink in my life."

"A very fine tale, indeed!"

"I am only troubled, sir, because I cannot face mother without a place."

"Well, these slums are no place for a youth; they breed criminals. Go home, and go to work."

"Will *you* give me work, sir?"

The broker passed on without reply.

Broken and disheartened, the baffled youth was edging his way into the saloon, when a familiar tap on his shoulder caused him to turn round.

"Why, Tom!" exclaimed the foreman of the Wall-paper Factory. "What in the world are you doing here?"

"Mr. Peterson!" stammered Tom Sedgwick in confusion.

"Tom," said the foreman, "I know you feel bad about the shut-down; but this sink of perdition can't help you. I called at your house about dinner-time, and have been looking for you ever since.

"Is the factory going to start up again, boss?"

inquired the boy, with a little light coming once more into his face.

"No, not that. The trust is preparing to move the fixtures to a plant in another state."

The lad's countenance fell.

"But it just popped into my mind this morning, that you would be the very boy to compete for the prize offered by the Domestic Art Guild. The prize is one hundred dollars for the best painting by a native of Woodville, under twenty years of age."

"Oh! Mr. Peterson, those fine folks wouldn't let me try for it;" moaned Tom, recalling his cruel rebuffs at the hands of the city's best society.

"Surely, you are mistaken, Tom," said Joe Peterson, with a smile that would have thawed a frozen heart. "You have taken lessons in drawing and painting for nearly two years; and your experience in mixing the paints at the factory, gives you a decided advantage. You are a natural artist; and you know you were promoted by the company because of your excellent eye for colors."

"But, you see, Mr. Peterson," gasped Tom excitedly, "I have no paint nor canvas."

"Never mind about that. I have all the necessary materials at the office, such as I use in my own practice. Call in the morning and get what you want."

"Oh! thank you, Mr. Peterson; you are so kind.

I had begun to think I did not have a friend in the world." And tears of gratitude and hope crept into Tom's eyes.

When Tom returned to his home in Gourd Vine alley, he found the baby crying for its crackers, and supper waiting for him. The babe was soon appeased as it held in its wasted hands the bundle that had cost its brother's last nickel. The mother had built great expectations upon her son's long delay as an omen of good. At length, she ventured to ask, "What success, Thomas?"

The boy hesitated, as if choked in the effort to swallow the last piece of his bread crust.

"You've got a job, haven't you, bud?" asked the oldest sister, looking anxiously at her mother.

"Yes; I have a job of painting a picture for the prize of a hundred dollars, offered by the Domestic Art Guild. Mr. Peterson says I stand a chance."

Mrs. Sedgwick threw up her hands, and uttered an involuntary shriek of disappointment.

Tom lay awake nearly all night creating studies for his picture. Many fancy scenes flitted before his excited vision, but, he thought to himself, they lacked soul. Nor did the wild flowers please him; nor the birds and beasts of meadow and forest; nor the cloud-flecked skies and the shimmer of streams and the glory of autumn hills. At length a happy thought possessed him. He conceived the

idea of combining in one sketch his most painful and most delightful experiences. The closing of the factory had given him the greatest sorrow, the unruffled love of his mother, the greatest joy. He would unite these two conceptions on canvas, and melt a heart of ice.

Next morning Tom brought in the materials the foreman had promised him, and began to outline his picture. He called his mother from her household duties.

“Mother, you must pose for me.”

“Do what, Thomas?”

“You must pose for me; you will be my inspiration; I think I can win the prize if you will sit for me.”

With moistened eyes Mrs. Sedgwick sat down, saying, “Thomas, who would pay a hundred dollars for my faded face?”

“It’s the sweetest face in all the world,” replied Tom; and his nimble fingers began their hopeful task.

The days fled as the young artist bent over his canvas; and even in the late night-watches he continued to work by the kindly blaze of lightwood fagots, for Mrs. Sedgwick had not purchased oil since the shut-down. After long hours of toil by day and by night, amid rain and sunshine, through hope and despair, the picture was placed, with

many others, on the stage of the Opera House to await its destiny.

The members of the Art Guild passed from picture to picture, critically scanning the several exhibits, in order to deposit their ballots; for, by a majority of such votes the award was to be determined. Two paintings were attracting particular notice, and it was evident that the contest lay between them. Both were very fine specimens for amateurs, and very unlike. The first was tastefully and expensively mounted, giving an advantageous setting to the design. The subject was a beautiful young woman; a leader of social circles; crowned with carnations on golden tresses; in low-necked ball costume; exposing exquisite bust; fingers bejeweled with flashing diamonds; delicate and graceful arms bared to the shoulders; a mischievous smile playing on ruby lips; one foot advanced in response to the first note of the violin. Title, "The Village Belle." The second was a contrast. A matron busy about her household work; sleeves rolled up to her elbows; hair somewhat disheveled; a homespun apron tied carelessly about the waist; dress drawn above her shoe tops; before her stands her sixteen-year-old boy, the sole means of support; despair written on every feature; pointing to a distant factory, from whose stacks no smoke rises, on whose gates is posted, CLOSED. The mother is lifting her hands to-

wards heaven, and is shrieking. Title, "The Crisis in the Home."

The curtain was lowered while the tellers counted the ballots. It was found that, by a majority of ten votes, the prize had been won by the painting entitled, "The Crisis in the Home." The unknown artist was requested to come upon the stage. Tom crept down from the gallery; and passing along the aisle of the dress-circle, his wan visage, his ungainly carriage, and above all his patched clothing, caused him to be rated as a servant employed about the edifice. When Tom appeared behind the scenes, the members of the Guild gasped. The "Christian" broker, chairman of the committee of awards, recognizing the youth that had called at his office for work, and that he had spied standing in front of a down-town saloon, imparted his information to the fraternity with unalloyed gravity. He stated that young Sedgwick did not live within the territory embraced in the Guild's invitation, and that because of his rank in society he was ineligible to competition for a prize.

The curtain rose, and the broker announced as winner the painting entered as "The Village Belle," by Miss Alice Saunders.

When Tom rushed out of the Opera House, in a sudden fit of melancholia, it was five o'clock in the afternoon. He was shaking with a nervous chil.

He seemed to be aimlessly rambling, while despair, dark and fatal, brooded over his spirit like a ghost from Hades. He sped beyond the city's bounds amid the lengthening shades of evening. He paused a moment, and looked up. Before him rolled the beautiful river. Why was he hastening thither? His home was behind him. Had mother, thought he, heard the decision of the committee? What would mother do without him? How would the sick babe fare without medicine? It had been ill so long. But why was he looking at the river? It seemed so broad, so beautiful, so calm. It had been a hard day with Tom Sedgwick. He had won a hundred dollars, which would have brought joy and light to his humble little home. He had planned to buy his mother a new dress, and to get many little things for his brothers and sisters, and a brand-new rattle for the babe. But his mother was poor, and society could recognize no merit in her son. He fled onward towards the winding river. The saloon men cursed him, for they wanted only his money. Business men classed him with the vermin of Gourd Vine alley, and even Christians heard not his plaintive story. Tom stood on the bank of the silver stream, quivering, dreaming. The placid water seemed to say, "In my bosom there is rest." He looked at the clouds, blushing in the rays of the setting sun, and wondered if there were a job

over there for him. And he bent his gaze upon the river. What would mother say? How will the baby get any more medicine? Then it occurred to Tom that his mother would be better off without him. People now refused to help her, because, they said, she had a son sixteen years old that wouldn't work. When he tried to get work, they refused him a job. When he won a prize, they gave it to another. So, he reasoned to himself, "Mother will be better off;" and great hot tears coursed down his haggard cheeks. He looked at the river, so smooth and so silent. Tom took from his pocket a match-box and untied it. His mother's hair—he kissed it and wept. With bared head he climbed upon the rock wall that kept the river in its place, and stood on it wondering. This is a bad world for a boy out of a job, he thought. The atmosphere was chill; he stooped down and touched the water; it felt warmer than the air. He stood up again; the waves of the deep channel swept by. Then he looked upward; the sun had gone; a single star stood on the horizon as if to stay the darkness that was coming. Tom gazed at it. Its bright beams, like silver arrows, shot into the great depths of the river. He wondered how far they lighted up the dark waters. Just then there came back to his fevered brain the picture he had made for the contest. His mother seemed to stand before him, calling near, then far

away, "Tom! Tom!" He listened; but it was the distant town clock striking six. A half score of mill whistles rent the air. Tom started; the whistle of his factory blew no more. All the sorrows of his young heart rushed to his mind. The whistles ceased—the river, so broad and so beautiful, swept on—and Tom lay asleep in its bosom.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE AWAKENING OF CORINNE HOWARD.

On the next Sabbath morning, Mr. Ernest related the story of Tom Sedgwick, whose tragic death was fresh in the minds of his auditors. He inquired abruptly, his great soul aflame with righteous indignation, "Who is responsible for the sad end of Tom Sedgwick? Who unhinged his mind? Who flung him into the river? The members of churches, the proud leaders of society, the possessors of lands and houses and money. With Christ's beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful," on your lips, you shut the noble youth out of your offices and your hearts. He asked work, and ye gave him a kick; he won a prize, and ye robbed him of it; he asked bread, and ye gave him a river of water." Here the preacher paused and wept; then he continued, "If the church were animated by the spirit of Christ, there would be no slums in our city. It has separated itself from the corrupt masses until it has itself become corrupt. It has, for the most part, withdrawn from active warfare with sin, until it has itself become sinful. It has practically lost interest in a dead

world, and consequently, though having a name to live, is yet itself dead. It will assist the mother and children, provided Tom Sedgwick commits suicide. The church, by its vote, helps to legalize the saloon; and the saloon is the chief factor in making the slum; hence it is evident that the church is responsible for the slum. Christian society legalizes rum; rum causes crime; then Christian society builds jails and erects gallows to punish crime. Rum makes paupers, then Christians build poor-houses. Rum makes orphans and maniacs, then Christians establish Homes and Asylums. Rum damns mankind, then the Christian government that legalized the rum, appoints a day for Thanksgiving! A Christian country sends a few missionaries abroad to convert the heathen, and rum enough to float a man-of-war. There is hardly anything more unchristian than the common phase of Christianity. Now," said the preacher, in conclusion, "Christ's method of destroying sin in a community, is to remove the sinner. He breaks up evil-doing by converting the evil-doer. He stops wickedness by changing the wicked. Christ's method was to go about among the lost, doing good. Our method is to get as far away from the lost as we can, trying to be good ourselves. The church must become aggressive, or hopeless decadence will be its doom.



"Corinne Howard, known until the coming of John Ernest, only
for her beauty and her worldliness."



It must take hold of the world and lift it up, or fall itself."

When the minister closed his remarks that went home to many hearts like an arrow to its goal, fifty persons or more rose enthusiastically to their feet, signifying their willingness to purge and save the plague-spots of the city. Among the most ardent was Corinne Howard, known until the coming of John Ernest only for her beauty and worldliness.

To persons who had never done anything to rescue abandoned communities, the scheme naturally appeared to be utopian. Nothing but the effect of recent social revolutions, like the change in Mrs. Stuart and Col. James, could have induced so considerable a number of the Grand Avenue members to enter thus heartily into a service which hitherto would have been pronounced insanely chimerical.

A program was speedily outlined which involved time, labor, sacrifice, money, and possibly life itself. But, Mr. Ernest well knew that such conditions are essential to a triumphant Christianity, and that a church which does not suffer does not conquer.

From the start it was clear that no small sum of money would be required before the work in Purgatory could be begun; and then scarcely any of the wealthiest members had endorsed the move-

ment. As this stubborn fact became prominent, it served as a damper to check the ardor of some; yet others were the more resolute, though perplexed.

It was at this distressing juncture that man's extremities became God's opportunities; and a messenger hastened to the pulpit bearing a letter addressed to John Ernest. The minister read it, and fell on his knees in prayer. He prayed that God might make him instrumental in saving Col. James from capital punishment, and that the family might be spared the disgrace that now seemed inevitable, unless the hand of the Lord interposed. The band of workers knew by the prayer, that the court had come to a decision, and that Col. James had been sentenced to death by hanging, for the crime of murder. John Ernest was strangely moved. His face became white, and he sat down. Then he stood up, and stammered, "I'll do the best I can to annul the sentence, and by God's help, I will." He proceeded to read Col. James' brief letter:

"REV. JOHN ERNEST:

My dear Sir: I wish to thank you for your efforts to save me, though the court has just pronounced the death sentence.

I have been informed of your mission plan for the redemption of Purgatory; and, since I was largely instrumental, through my brewery, in

making Purgatory what it is, I enclose a check for fifteen hundred dollars, which you may use in that section, in any way you think best.

Sincerely yours,

L. R. JAMES."

This letter seemed to indicate the divine approval of the plan that had been adopted for the saving of Purgatory. With enthusiasm at white heat, the body of workers appointed committees to carry its purposes into effect, according to the several clauses of the program. The Committee to Relieve Physical Distress, with Corinne Howard as chairman, was to begin the work which other committees would take up in turn.

It was indeed a new role that this cultivated girl was to act. She had been reared in a luxurious home, devoted to literature, art, and music, and, withal, was the pet of Woodville society. Was she fitted for such work? she kept asking herself. She had thought of slum workers as belonging to the plainer classes. Perhaps, she mused, I can't enter fully into the lives of these people, whose modes of thought are so different from mine. May be, they will not understand me. Then, think of the disease, filth, sorrow, and sin I must encounter. But, on the other hand, how glorious to relieve the sufferings of distressed mankind! And thinking thus, she bent in prayer; and a Saviour's voice seemed to say, "I was a hungered, and ye

gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." As the beautiful girl rose from her knees, she looked towards Purgatory, and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Corrine put on her plainest dress, took off her diamond ring, and squeezing into her brown jacket, started towards her hard field of labor, to meet the other members of the committee. It was ten o'clock, when she, with cheeks reddened by the crisp morning air, greeted her fellow-workers at the foot of Devil's Hill. "I am so glad, Dr. Foster," said she, "that you have consented to serve on the committee; for, as our first work is with the sick and afflicted, I am sure no one can render more efficient aid than yourself."

Dr. Foster was a young physician, not many years from the medical college, and was rapidly building up a practice in Woodville. He appreciated this compliment from Miss Howard, and assured her that he would spare no pains to relieve the physical ills of Purgatory.

Corinne led the committee from house to house and from block to block in the very heart of the forsaken district. New scenes met her; and she

drew long and frequent sighs as she beheld oft recurring scenes of poverty, squalor, misery, and shame. She asked herself, why she had never been interested in Purgatory before? Why the churches of Woodville allowed such suffering and sin to exist without any adequate effort to relieve them? Why did not all the ministers preach about it like John Ernest? She entered every house and flat and hut where she thought bodily suffering might exist. Strange sights, strange odors, strange woes, and strange people—all of them appalling and heart-rending—surrounded her on every side. She could not help wondering how she could have spent her life only a mile from such wretchedness, without knowing of its existence. But as she brought comfort into these sad homes, and saw Dr. Foster giving medicine to the sick, and all the committee bowing in prayer around some aged invalid, she understood, with an increasing clearness, what John Ernest meant by the Christianity of Christ.

So charming was the work to Corinne, so absorbed was she in her mission, that she had not stopped long enough to take lunch—and the afternoon was far advanced. She led the committee on with rapid gait, to one more house, where she purposed to close the labors for the day—it was Seventeen Gourd Vine alley. A ragged urchin met her at the door, and conducted her to an

upper room, dark and musty and squalid. Mrs. Sedgwick was sitting on a box with her arm resting on her dead babe. She was weeping. It was only a few days since Tom left her, and with him her only means of support was gone. Corinne placed one arm around the mother and wept with her. Strengthened by this act of sympathy, Mrs. Sedgwick raised her head, and began to apologize for the untidy condition of the room; but Corinne assured her that no explanation was necessary, and herself began to straighten up the broken furniture, and make up the pallet on the floor. Then turning to the mother, she said, "Mrs. Sedgwick, I want the privilege of attending to your child's funeral. It will be at Grand Avenue Church." "Oh! no, Miss; nobody would want my child there. They don't know me, and I'm so poor."

"Never mind that," said Corinne, "the tears glistening like diamonds in her eyes; it will give me a sad pleasure to have it all arranged. Mr. Ernest will conduct the service."

After providing food and some comforts, and promising to call again, the committee separated, and went to their several homes; one member having agreed to arrange for the burial robe, another for the casket, and another for the funeral exercises. So the babe was buried with the re-

spect due to a human being, whose life continues when the heavens and the earth are dissolved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“NEVER.”

Corinne reached home at dusk, and found Mason Saunders awaiting her return. She was tired; she had just passed through experiences that harrowed her very soul. She had prayed and laughed and sung and wept. She needed rest, for the day's work had been long and hard. Her first impression was to excuse herself; but after some reflection, she concluded that such a course would appear rude; for she had known Mason from childhood. They had hunted muscadines together in the crisp autumn days in the wild woods without the city; they had gathered chestnuts by day and roasted them by night in the old hickory embers on the open hearth; they had recited side by side in school; he had helped her solve problems in arithmetic, while she had given him equal assistance in writing his compositions; he had carried her books and sharpened her pencils for her; and withal, their fathers had been friends through many long years. And besides all this, there were times when she thought she felt more than a passing interest in the brilliant

young lawyer. He was so talented, so highly esteemed in fashionable society, so winsome in his manner, so handsome. He had received the master's degree from the State University, and had won some of the most valued and coveted prizes and medals offered by the institution. And by no means least in the eyes of most maidens, he was rich, having fallen heir to a fortune of half a million dollars.

She opened her album and looked at his photograph. She paused, and a hundred pleasing memories rushed to her mind. She gazed at the lock of auburn hair that lay opposite his picture; then took it up and put it back again. Had she ever loved Mason Saunders? Then she thought of Dr. Foster, ministering in the sympathy of his great soul, to the needs of Purgatory. How all good people respected him! How the poor loved him! A pillar in Grand Avenue, at the same time a mighty force in the slums. As gentle as a woman, yet possessing the courage of a martyr. A Christian, standing on a plane of spiritual vision above his fellows, foursquare and twelve-gated. How she wished Mason Saunders were such a man! But why should she be thinking of Dr. Foster? and she blushed alone. The hour of decision had come, and she knelt down and prayed for divine guidance.

As Corinne entered the parlor, Saunders clasp-

ed her hand, and looking into her face, all radiant with the joy of Christian service, he thought he had never seen her so exquisitely beautiful before. He sat beside her.

"I am sorry, Mason, you have had to wait so long; I had been out all day, and have just returned from my work."

"Sure enough," said the lawyer; "I have heard that you have become a missionary."

"No," answered Corinne calmly; "I am only a plodding worker among the outcasts."

"I had hoped that you would have aimed at something higher."

"I don't know of anything higher, Mason," said Corinne coloring.

"Corinne, it is in your power to be queen of the social circle of Woodville; and do you think you have a right to disregard your gifts, to say nothing of the wishes of your friends?"

"Mason, I would rather be servant of Christ in Purgatory than queen of society in Woodville."

"Then, won't you be both?" asked Saunders in a subdued voice.

"I shall be servant, because service is Christ-like; but I hardly think I care to pose as an advertisement for milliners, or to be recognized as a leader of fashionable circles, whose customs are not only silly, but savage."

For a moment, the lawyer was silent. He had

never known the amiable daughter of Tom Howard thus to arraign society before. She had been the cynosure of an aristocratic coterie; so that now, to find her giving her undivided attention to the slums, and forging invectives against the empire in which she had reigned, was to his legal brain a downright puzzle. He began, moreover, to realize that she was drifting farther and farther from him.

"I can't conceive," at length he said, "of the belle of the city, the mistress of a charmed circle, the autocrat of society, intellectual, polished, graceful, beautiful, receiving the homage of all hearts, wasting her energies on the slums of Purgatory. These outcasts, Corinne, can't appreciate such love as yours; they are base, they are hardened. Corinne Howard, I love you too much to see you spending your strength on these human reptiles. You are needed in nobler spheres."

"But, Mason, is what is known as good society less hardened? There are two social extremes in Woodville; one lives in the alleys, the other on the avenues; and the main difference between them religiously, is the width of the street. Neither is civilized nor Christianized. The upper classes have, indeed, greater influence and opportunity for wrong-doing, which they seem to use to the fullest extent, hence, in view of their far greater privileges, they are worthy of severer

censure. They that dwell in stone houses and wear soft raiment are the ones that run the Sunday trains and excursions; that issue the Sunday papers; that deal in futures; that gamble on an extensive scale and by novel methods; that form oppressive trusts; that patronize the low german; that drink wines and other liquors in bestial club-houses; that mar the sacred rite of marriage by divorce; that foster the most degrading pride and hate; that parade the most unblushing infidelity; that, in the guise of church forms, manifest to the world nothing higher than a polished paganism; and that, in the name of man's Redeemer, 'crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.'"

"Corinne, you preach just like John Ernest; and that's the worst thing I have ever said about you."

"I wish we both lived like him, Mason."

"Oh! Corinne, how your ideals have changed. A year ago you detested such sanctified fakers."

"I am sure you misunderstand Mr. Ernest; he lives in one kingdom, and most of us in another. A grub swaddled in its native slime cannot comprehend the higher life of the papilio, floating in sunbeams on rainbow pinions, glorified in its metamorphosis. The worm must develop wings before it can rise to the sphere of the butterfly."

"I see," said the lawyer smiling in his sleeve. "I call to mind a striking illustration of your

celestial biology. I know a man who is crawling out of the mud and growing some splendid wings. When I first met him, he was grubbing on a barren farm, and I suppose might be called a grub. He afterwards learned to make pills, becoming a pa-pill-io, as you say, and for pinions had a pair of saddle-bags, attached, however, not to himself, but to the semblance of a horse; and the animal thus winged, we may presume, was transformed into a horse-fly. Now, the grub has become a doctor, rides on the trolleys, floats on golden wings, prepared by Col. James, through the fire-lit abysses of Purgatory, soars anon with gaudy plumage in the skies of religious fanaticism, winning the hearts of Woodville's fairest daughters."

Corinne felt her cheeks flushing, but resolved not to resent Saunders' imputation upon the character of her co-worker in the slums; though she recognized her right to express her indignation. So, with forced composure, she replied, "I don't know any one that answers to your description, I'm sure. We have but one doctor working with us, Dr. Foster, who receives no salary from the Col. James fund, or elsewhere; and his skill as a physician and his zeal as a Christian place him above all criticism."

"But such a fanatic!" exclaimed the young law-

yer, growing evidently restless under Corinne's praise of Foster.

"I think, Mason, your language is infelicitous," said the indignant young woman, seeking to conceal undue interest in the physician. "You are, of course, aware that the word 'fanatic' has been forced to do service for innumerable errors, and that it is a favorite argument with the opposers of reforms. To the Israelites, Moses was at one time a fanatic; to the Romanists, Luther was a fanatic; to the formalists of Old England, Wesley was a fanatic; to the copperheads of New England, Garretson was a fanatic; to the Puritans, Roger Williams was a fanatic; to the rum-sellers of America, John B. Gough was a fanatic; and to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus was a fanatic. So, after all, in the light of these splendid examples of wisdom and virtue, it may not be so bad to be a crank; and you, perhaps, would lose nothing by reconsidering the matter, and by yourself joining the noble army of fanatics."

The lawyer, perceiving that he had touched the wrong note in attempting argument and ridicule, at once turned the current of conversation.

"Corinne," said he, "there was a happy time when we seemed to think and feel alike; but of late there has arisen a shadow between us, I hope only a shadow, but that's enough to cast a gloom over my life. In view of our long acquaintance,

dating from early childhood, tell me frankly what has cast this dark shadow. Has some ghost come between us?"

"Yes."

"In the name of heaven, who?"

"The Holy Ghost."

These strange words fell upon Saunders' ears like a peal of thunder from a cloudless sky. In some way, inscrutable to him, the woman of his love was linked with the higher powers. He drew a long, deep sigh, and asked her to explain.

"Mason, I have changed. I am no longer the frivolous girl you used to know. My ideals have also changed. All things have become new, old things have passed away. A new light has come into my life, new hopes have filled my heart, and a new purpose has seized my mind. In the light of his word, I have seen God."

"While we may differ, Corinne, as to some minor particulars about Christianity, and may form dissimilar estimates of religious workers, may we not still agree in some very important affairs of quite another nature?"

"I have learned to believe that there are no affairs outside of Christianity. Christ is the spring of our energies, our conduct, our hopes, our joys, and—our love."

"Yet, was there not a time when I found favor with you, in the halcyon days before our Grand

Avenue Pietists won you from me by their mad enthusiasm?"

"The day was when your pleasing manner and your gentle flatteries were acceptable to me. But now the hollow ways of society no longer charm me. I look for Christ in them, and I see only Satan. I could not be unequally yoked with a society man, and I had rather marry a good-natured savage than a Christian pagan."

"Corinne, your better self is blinded by excessive zeal. I feel deeply the wound your words have inflicted; and, I pray you, heal it by your own sweet ministry, for I know you would not be intentionally cruel. I have loved you always. You have possessed my heart through the golden years of our youth, and my affections have ripened with the lapse of time. Speak one word of hope to me, or the world becomes a mass of ashes under my feet. Tell me that you may yet be mine, and my pathway will be arched with unfading stars. You hold the scales of my destiny."

"Mason, our paths diverge."

"Then, Corinne Howard, do you mean to say that you will never marry me?"

And with face all crimsoned and glorified with the love of Jesus, she answered, "Never!"

CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTAIN DICK BROWN.

The liquor element had become infuriated by the bold utterances of the reformers made at their last meeting on Devil's Hill. The boisterousness of the mob began to forecast trouble. Three or four drunken women, instigated by the rabble, rushed towards the stand in wild frenzies,, dancing screaming, cursing. While these female demons were attracting the attention of the speakers with their weird orgies, a masked man crept up behind the platform, placed something under it, and quietly retired without observation. At the same time, the multitude melted away into the darkness. Judge Castleberry, from long acquaintance in the courts with the treachery and infamy of the slums, was quick to discover that this concerted action on the part of the mob was ominous of ill. He turned to Charles Kent, whispering, "I fear there is a plot on hand. See those people, as if by prearrangement, slinking back to a distance, watching? We had better —."

A sudden flash of fire along the ground—a thunder that drowned the city's noise, the hub-

bub of cars, wagons, mills—a shock that made the earth quiver—the platform hurled into the air above the tops of the trees—Grand Avenue's choicest sons and daughters bruised, wounded, mutilated, dead!

John Ernest and Dr. Foster were among the wounded; and among the sainted dead, Judge Castleberry, the incorruptible officer of justice, the dread of evil-doers, the humble and fearless Christian; and Mrs. Stuart, won from an evil life, consecrated to the service of Jesus, founder of work in the slums, the sweet singer of Purgatory. How are the mighty fallen!

Ten days had elapsed since the inhuman tragedy and two graves, eight feet apart, had been made on the spot over which the demolished rostrum had stood. They had been bricked over and served as foundations for the new platform. On the thick planks, resting on the graves, Mr. Ernest appeared, supported by a crutch, one arm in a sling, and spoke to the people who came in increased numbers, to scoff or to praise. His face showed not so much bodily as mental anguish. The granary of the Master had lost some of the finest of the wheat. A prince and a princess had fallen in Israel. Zion mourned over her martyred children. The moon, full-orbed, was just rising above the low rows of cottages that skirted

Devil's Hill, when the preacher began his discourse as follows:

" 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.' In the departure of our comrades, Purgatory has lost two of its best friends, and Christianity two of its brightest lights. But they being dead, are yet speaking; and this is the way God wins his victories. While noble purpose cannot decay, while love is immortal, Judge Castleberry cannot die. And while yonder moon sweeps across the brow of night and bathes Purgatory in her silver sheen, Mrs. Stuart, the prime-mover in this holy crusade against evil, will exert her kindly influence. This babe (taking in his arms Mrs. Stuart's child) will be the ward of this chapel when constituted. I indulge the hope that this child may some day stand in this completed structure, over her mother's grave, and sing the sacred songs her mother sang."

And five hundred heads bowed in prayer for the child.

The meeting continued from night to night with augmented interest. Many believed, others jeered and interrupted the service; in spite, however, of all difficulties, the Word grew mighty.

One evening as Mr. Ernest finished an impassioned appeal to men to turn to God, a hearer came forward and asked if he might make a statement. Dr. Foster invited him to come upon the

platform. It was Capt. Dick Brown, president of the Purgatory Free Thinkers' Club. The Captain was an omnivorous reader, a fluent talker, a natural leader of men, and exerted a wide-spread influence in the social life of the slums. It was more than a surprise when he ascended the rostrum. The people gathered closer about the stand; for it was the universal expectation that the notorious infidel would ridicule religion and attack the movement the Grand Avenue Christians had set on foot.

"Fellow-citizens:" he began; "the crisis of our social life has come. Our customs and institutions must give way, or else the Gospel of Christ as Mr. Ernest interprets it, must be repudiated. Which is better, Christianity or our customs? I shall now state briefly my testimony, which will answer this question, so far as I am concerned.

"At the beginning of these meetings, I heard Mr. Ernest say that a godly life is a continuous miracle of grace. He then went on to define what he meant by a godly life. He asserted that such a life is impossible without the aid of supernatural power. Just here is where I differed with him. I did not believe in a supernatural power, and accounted for what is called a godly life without God, on purely natural principles. I thought some people are born good, while others become good by the force of their wills. Then, the things that

Christians praised, did not appear to me to be better than many things that they condemned. So, when the preacher affirmed that holiness is a perpetual miracle, I resolved to lead such a life, as outlined by him, in order to disprove the divine origin of Christianity. I proposed to lead a strictly religious life for ten days, then to go back to my club and declare that by actual experiment there is nothing supernatural in religion. I made sure it could be gotten, kept, or lost at will. My first step in becoming holy, was to buy a Bible. I read it night and day. I memorized the twenty-third Psalm and the Ten Commandments. Those commandments went rather hard with me, but I made up my mind to keep every one of them. The only one I had been observing was 'Honor thy father and thy mother'—my parents were dead. I meditated on the teachings of the New Testament, and learned by heart many choice passages, such as the Lord's prayer, the beatitudes, the parable of the prodigal son, etc. I sought to obey the Gospel, and gave up everything it condemns. I slept with the Bible under my pillow, for I had heard of good people doing that. I hung a daily comforter on my wall, and first thing in the morning I read its holy lesson, even before I dressed. Yet, I will confess, I suffered a twinge of conscience, whenever I realized that my attitude towards the Bible was entirely mechanical. I often

recalled Mr. Moody's illustration about the bee, and several more twinges seized me. The evangelist said: "No one can be a Christian without loving the Scriptures. A man once made an artificial bee, which was so like a real bee that he challenged another man to tell the difference. It made just such a buzzing as the live bee, and looked the same. The other man said, 'You put an artificial bee and a real bee down there, and I will tell you the difference pretty quickly.' The first man then put his artificial bee and the living bee on the ground three inches apart, and put a drop of honey between them. The real bee went straight for the honey. There are lots of people who profess to be Christians, but they are artificial." I made up my mind to be a real bee and love the honey. So I adorned my Bible with ribbons, placed it on the center-table after each reading, covered it with netting, and began to fancy I loved it. It now became more and more evident that religion is a process which any man of ordinary will-power can master. I had taken my first step, and was getting along nicely. In ten days, or less, I would be holy.

"The next duty was to obey my Book. I gave up everything I thought it condemned. I was given to occasional profanity; I quit swearing. I sometimes lied when it was uncomfortable to tell the truth; I quit lying. I took my drink with the

boys at every meeting of the Club, and often between times; I quit drinking. I was in the habit of saying hard things about my neighbors if they crossed me; I quit slandering. I also abandoned my vices of all names. The preachers called this a negative life, and held that religion does not consist so much in not doing as in doing. Accordingly, I resolved to do. I entered upon the greatest activities. I became a spiritual Hercules, performing not twelve, but a hundred great deeds. Mr. Ernest said that good works were a necessary mark of a Christian character. So I went into the alleys of Purgatory and relieved the distress of a score of poor families; I gave a dollar to a cripple; I subscribed to all the charity organizations in town; I gave a month's rent to a destitute widow whose boy had drowned himself in the river; I refused to rent my stores any longer to bar-keepers, and yesterday I closed up the last saloon belonging to me; I stopped going to the Free Thinkers' Club, until my experiment closed; I attended church. In a quiet way I encouraged all reform works. I favored closing the gambling dives and disreputable houses; I was ready to vote for a better class of officers, and to insist on better laws regulating and suppressing the liquor business; in fine, I was as stalwart a reformer as trod the streets of Woodville.

"I gave my next care to myself. How about

my integrity? I found that I was not strictly honest; for in a horse trade I had swapped an unsound animal for a better one. I exchanged with the man, and paid him some damages; after which I felt better. Indeed, I now considered myself far superior in spiritual attainments to the average Christian.

"As home is the place to test a man, I undertook to manifest my piety in my own family. This was an exceedingly difficult part of the program. To play a hollow role before the wife, in whose memorandum all your follies, weaknesses, and guilty idiosyncrasies have been noted with distressing infallibility, requires the courage of a mighty man of valor. After breakfast, I caressed my wife most tenderly—a duty I had long neglected—and kissed the children before going to my office. At eleven o'clock, I called with the best equipage the livery could furnish to take Mrs. Brown out into the meadows for a morning ride. I called at the florist's and selected several rare and beautiful roses for her, and stopping at the confectioner's, I had ice-cream served, and purchased some fresh bonbons. At dinner, Mrs. Brown remarked that she was happier than she had been since the early days of our married life. This remark gave me an opportunity to ask if she did not think a great change had taken place in me. She replied, with a smile, that she had never

seen so marked an improvement in anybody; and she wanted to know whether I had been attending the meetings at Devil's Hill.

“‘Yes,’ said I.

“‘Dick, that accounts for it; you've got religion!’

“‘Yes, love, I am a godly man; and I want you also to become a Christian.’

“‘Well, now that you have started, I'll think about it. How strange we were content to spend the larger part of our life without even a Bible in our home!’

“‘It is not the Bible, my dear; it is our own will-power.’

“‘Of course, you exerted your will before the Lord helped you, Dick.’

“‘Let's have correct ideas of religion, Lucy: the Lord had nothing to do with it; I did it all myself.’”

“Mrs. Brown looked serious, but said nothing.

“In one of his after-meetings, Mr. Ernest remarked that there can be no genuine religion without the forgiveness of our enemies. This phase of religion staggered me at first, and I seriously contemplated giving up the job; but if I did, my failure would only prove the preacher's proposition to be true, and that was repulsive to my proud spirit. So I made the struggle. I visited every party in Woodville that had wronged me

or that I had wronged, and either granted or asked pardon. This was a new business, and was like pulling eye-teeth; but I succeeded at last in forgiving everybody.

"There remained but one more rung in the ladder of righteousness for me to reach; namely, the exercise of prayer. I knew it was universally held by Christians that prayer is essential to godliness; but how could I pray to a God in whom I did not believe? I read the Bible because there is such a book; the case, however, was different when, by supplication, I acknowledged a Being whose very existence I denied. Yet, I must learn to pray, or surrender to Mr. Ernest. So I went to my office and locked the door. I knelt down. I was puzzled as to how I should begin; at length, I said, 'O thou great Nothing.' Then I had to laugh. Of course, I did not believe there was any virtue in prayer, but it was part of a program, and I must go through with it. I closed my eyes again, and without addressing any One, said, 'Help me to be good.' Then, startled at my voice, and astounded by my folly, I arose. Why was I praying for help, when to receive help, would justify Mr. Ernest's contention, that religion is supernatural? And, moreover, why was I asking to be made good, when I was already as good as any man in town?

"My experiment was now complete. I had suc-

cessfully demonstrated that righteousness can be fabricated without supernatural aid, and that praying is superstition. I felt a strong desire to compare my experience with that of Mr. Ernest, before reporting to the Club. Yes, I resolved to give up prayer, since I had gotten godly without it; and had at last clearly shown that divine grace, even in the best of men, is but a mechanical performance, that can be accomplished by any man of strong will-power. I had a discovery that I believed would make my name famous for all time.

"My next move was to disguise myself as a tramp and to go up to see John Ernest. He was just getting ready to come down to Purgatory; he looked tired and sick. But he seemed as glad to see me as if I had been his brother. He gave me a warm grasp of the hand, and asked if I had had any supper. He wanted to know whether he could do anything for me. As I saw this man's unselfishness and love of mankind, I began to feel that, after all, John Ernest was a little ahead of me yet. I did such things for a few days; he did them all the time. I did good from a bad motive; he, from a good motive. Then, I thought I could attend later to my motives, while otherwise I was as good as he.

"Mr. Ernest asked me if I were a Christian. I answered that I was, so far as I knew, a godly

man. Then he said, 'Let us pray together for our Father's blessing.' I did not bow nor close my eyes at first, but as the minister went on, I thought I could touch God; John Ernest appeared to know where he staid, and seemed to call him right into the study. I began to get frightened. I felt that all my good works were unutterably bad; my whole life seemed a sham and falsehood; my heart seemed to be a very cesspool of crime. I trembled as if I had been smitten with palsy. John Ernest went on praying; but I jumped up, rushed to the door, and fled from God in the darkness of the night. I went home, entered my room, and as I knelt down, prayed, 'My Father in heaven.' I don't feel good now, but I feel happy. Here was the difference between John Ernest and me. I jumped five feet towards heaven and came back to the mire; he jumped into the arms of Jesus and staid there. The preacher is right; no man can be a Christian until a miracle is wrought in him. Now, I want to say that I have left the Free Thinkers' Club, and desire to join this church as soon as it is started."

Annie Morgan sang "Saved by Grace;" after which Mr. Ernest said, "Dick Brown's name shall go down on the roll as the first constituent member of what will be known as James' Chapel."

CHAPTER XX.

THE CASE OF COLONEL JAMES.

Ever since the conviction of Col. James, dark shadows lay across John Ernest's path, and an increasing burden weighed upon his shoulders. Though disheartened by repeated failures to secure a pardon for the brewer, he resolved to make a last desperate attempt, boarding the early morning train for the State Capitol. It was only two days before the time appointed for the execution, and the Governor had resolutely declined to give him further audience. Having spent the night in prayer, the minister prosecuted his mission of mercy in spite of seemingly insurmountable difficulties. When he arrived at the Executive Mansion, he called for the Governor's wife, who, being a Christian lady, was easily moved by Mr. Ernest's touching story. She consented, at his urgent request, to dispense with the usual formalities of the Mansion; and, should her husband grant a hearing, to be present herself at the interview.

The noble woman accompanied the Governor to the parlor, and took a seat. His Excellency

looked a little surprised, but said nothing.

"Governor," began John Ernest, "I have come again to beg executive clemency in the case of Col. James."

"Mr. Ernest," asked the Executive with a degree of impatience, "how can you exert your great influence in seeking to clear a guilty man? As a Christian minister, you are expected to be foremost in condemning crime."

"Your Excellency, I condemn the crime and all parties connected therewith; and as conspirators to the crime, I do now most solemnly arraign every voter that by his ballot has licensed the saloon that furnished the prisoner liquor; I prefer a charge of murder against the Legislature for placing the saloon on a legal basis; and I impeach your Excellency as accessory to the crime of Col. James, on the ground that in your canvass you tacitly allied yourself with the saloon, and in your message to the Legislature you ignored the greatest issue before the people, the temperance question."

Here John Ernest paused. The Governor shook his eyes flashed, his cheeks burned. He made, however, no reply to these grave charges, and suffered his accuser to urge his plea; for there was logic in the minister's indictment, and "there was method in his madness."

"I urge," continued the preacher, "as a further

ground for pardon, the fact that when Col. James committed the crime, he was crazed with strong drink, and simply became a drunken agent in the hands of a conclave of brewery and saloon men who thought their interest would be imperiled by my settling in Woodville. The conspirators used Col. James as a mere cat's paw to accomplish their nefarious ends. Now, Governor, bear with me a moment, as I present quite a different class of facts; then I shall leave the matter with you and your God.

"Col. James has become a changed man since the crime, a fact evidenced by his voluntary confession. He has sought to repair, as far as possible, the immense wrong he has done. He has paid to the widow of the unfortunate conductor the sum of ten thousand dollars; he has completed arrangements for the conversion of his great property into benefactions; he has donated a lot in the slums of Woodville for a chapel, and has made ample provision for the cost of the building whose erection has already begun, and whose corner-stone is to be laid at once; he has closed his brewery and all saloons under his control, and has done more, though incarcerated, than almost any other one man to destroy the rum power in Woodville. And here is a petition for his pardon, signed by the leading citizens of Woodville, by the motorman of the wrecked trolley, the conductor's

widow, the little girl that was injured, and myself, at whom the blow was aimed."

The Governor took the petition, and as he read it, remarked, "I see you have here the names of Senator Kent, the Hon. John Morgan, and Joe Peterson—all good and wise men. But Mr. Ernest, I can render no help; Col. James by his own confession is guilty of murder, has been justly condemned by an able court, and to pardon him would be an abuse of power on my part. I am very sorry, but the law must take its course."

"But Governor," said John Ernest, with voice tremulous with emotion, "the object of law is to restrain crime; and while the execution of the prisoner would enforce a wholesome lesson, his pardon would effect the redemption of ill-famed Purgatory. If released, it would be in the power of Col. James to accomplish more in behalf of law and order in the slums of Woodville than any ten men in the city; for he is a born leader of men, and if pardoned, it is our purpose to appoint him our first missionary at the Chapel. You see, Governor, the pardoning franchise would have no other effect than to further the interests of lawless humanity in our town."

"Yes, Governor," interceded the lady of the Mansion, whose sympathies were now thoroughly awakened, "that puts the matter in a new light. If life is worth more to a community than death,

all noble instincts incline us to mercy." And hot tears trickled down her cheeks.

But the old Executive was resolute, and shook his head as if unmoved. The prisoner was a notable character, and to exercise clemency in his behalf would subject the administration to severe criticism from certain political quarters. So the case seemed hopeless.

Suddenly the minister rose from his seat, and standing before the Governor said, in all the pathos and music of a crushed soul, "I have discharged my duty, and having failed to secure a pardon for Col. James, I feel that a shadow hangs over my life. I believe that crime should be punished, and in ordinary cases I do not interfere with the usual process of the law, but uphold it as just and needful. This, however, is an exceptional instance, and I think should be treated on its own merits. The weal or woe of Purgatory hinges on the destiny of Col. James; the glory of God is connected with his pardon. Now, I have this one request to make, after which I shall trouble you no more forever; and it is this: I pray you, with all the vehemence and solemnity of my soul, to suffer me to take the place of Col. James day after to-morrow on the scaffold, and suffer death in his stead."

This was an appeal that only a stone could resist. The Governor's wife was sobbing, and the

Governor himself with watery eyes went to his private office, and, sitting at his desk, wrote a letter which he addressed to the sheriff of Midland county. He returned and gave the letter to Mr. Ernest without a word.

When Col. James received the notification of his pardon, he began at once to evince the sincerity of his faith by surrendering all his property, save an ample dowry for Mrs. James, to the slums of Purgatory. The humble missionary realized that the religion of Jesus requires those who embrace it to make all possible amends for wrong-doing; and since his estate had been acquired by injuring others, he resolved to expend it now in benefiting them. He accordingly sold his elegant home and princely grounds, his splendid furniture and imported table-ware, his upholstered carriages and spirited thoroughbreds, his diamond pin and ring, his gold Elgin, and half a dozen tailor-made suits, and whatever other property he had was turned into money. The funds thus secured, were, for the most part, used to further the interests of the Chapel, to build a home for orphans, and a training school for Corinne's "infant mob," as she called it.

This course, so clearly in accord with the Saviour's will, awakened, nevertheless, bitterest opposition in the family circle. Mrs. James contended that she did not marry a missionary, but

a business man; and since she had lived in luxury, she was not willing to come down to the life and surroundings of a slum worker. Mr. Ernest pleaded with her, but to no purpose. She preferred the world of fashion and ease to the drudgery incident to missionary labor. Refusing, therefore, to enter into the mission work, she received sufficient money from the estate to afford a comfortable living, and with her three children, she left Col. James crushed and alone; and yet, not alone, for God was with him.

When he went to his home from the slums, for the last time, to bid his family farewell—every member of which he dearly loved—he sat down and wept, until the world seemed to reel before him like some child's top whose course was nearly run. He staggered at length into the presence of his loved ones, and lo, his wife refused to speak to him! He pressed the children to his bosom, and without speaking, turned his steps towards Gourd Vine alley, where he had rented a little room as his dwelling-place. He sat down in a plain chair, and wept and prayed. Then he opened the Bible, and his eyes fell on these words of the Master: "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and

brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." When he had read this promise he fell upon his knees and looked up; by faith he saw diadems, sceptres, angelic hosts, and the great company of the redeemed, whose faces shone with celestial radiance; and a voice of wondrous music said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And above all rose the great white throne, on which sat in kingly state the Son of Man; and on his head were many crowns. While the weary suppliant gazed on the King in his beauty, the Redeemer seemed to bend towards him, and to reach out the everlasting arms to help him; as he beheld the glory of his Lord, great hot streams rolled down his sunken cheeks, whilst in sobs of chastened love he cried, "Jesus! O Lord Jesus!" The vision closed. A watery film gathered in the eyes, the breast heaved, the head bowed, the heart fluttered, the frame was convulsed—and Col. James fell on sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PROBLEM OF THE POOR.

The work in Purgatory went bravely on, and at almost every service the Lord added to the mission those that were being saved. The Committee had attempted great things, and great things had been accomplished; for the law of Christian service, as laid down by the Master himself, is, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." The efforts put forth to reform Purgatory were of greater value to Woodville than a thousand gilt-edged sermons aimlessly shot at dead congregations, and Mrs. Stuart and Corinne Howard did more to break up Satan's kingdom in the slums than any half dozen churches in the town in twenty-five years. This is a sweeping charge, but the indisputable results as daily evidenced in the vicinity of Devil's Hill, would seem to justify it. In the few months since the election, a perceptible change had come over the spirit of the slums. Quite a number of the defeated liquor men went to other cities, or, as was true in many instances, they were encouraged to lay their hand to some honorable work. They were in all cases treated

kindly, and some of them were converted. When men lost their jobs because of the Reform movement, they and their families were tided over their difficulties until they themselves, or else the committee appointed for the purpose, found employment for them. No man was compelled to do dishonorable labor in order to support his family. This fact of itself created brotherhood; and brotherhood is what, after all, the world needs. Men are seeking it in all sorts of orders, clubs, lodges, and organizations, while a true church of Jesus Christ can alone present to mankind the highest phase of fraternity. All that is good in human societies, and much more, is found in the church, when the church is true to the teaching of its Lord. No man need seek membership in any fraternal organization for the development of his social and spiritual nature, provided he belongs to a church that is really Christian.

Noted only for a bad name and worse people, Purgatory had been the home of lawlessness, ignorance, filth and poverty. It had no church, it had no God, it had no Sabbath, and it had almost no night. Its alleys were trod by day and by night under the feet of godless, besotted, criminal men and women. It was dangerous to pass through half of its streets after dark. No spot in heathendom was more degraded. The Bushmen of Southern Africa were their equals in intelli-

gence and morals. In manners they were Hottentots. But now a reformation took place, which could be accounted as nothing less than a moral miracle wrought by the Spirit of God. There was not a low show, an immoral den, a gambling dive, an infidel club, or a saloon in Purgatory. Instead of these degrading evils, there sprang up Miss Howard's Training School for children, a splendidly equipped Orphanage, two large factories employing a thousand hands, and, above all, James' Chapel, the light and glory of the slums. The work was apostolic, and the results were apostolic. The jail was almost empty, the Chapel was full, the streets were cleaner, the business was better, the children were happier, and the homes were purer. A better generation began to grow up, that would not make criminals, but citizens; not paupers, but wealth-producers; not infidels, but believers, not animals, but people.

Such was a synopsis of the report submitted at the monthly business meeting of Grand Avenue Church by the chairman of the Committee.

When Dr. Foster took his seat, Mr. Ernest rose and said: "This is a glorious showing. Nothing but religion ablaze could have produced such results. Faith is a flame, and this is the fire which Jesus said he came to send on the earth. There are still, however, many heroic measures to be taken. The church must face the problem of res-

cuing the submerged nine-tenths from savagery, and must cease uttering cheap sentimental apologies for ignorance and pauperism instead of resolutely seeking to condemn and abolish them. Ignorance and poverty allied are not only the hotbed of crime, but they prove a menace to civilization, and a formidable barrier to evangelization. After protracted deliberation, I am convinced that Miss Howard's 'Infant Mob' has demonstrated the true method of dealing with the youth of the slums. The aim of this Institution is to take all the children from hopeless and degraded families under its beneficent instructions, and by substituting the ~~home~~, to train its wards for intelligent citizenship. As to practical results, all the members of the Institution have abandoned barbarism, while many have embraced Christianity. I am convinced that as long as children remain under the baneful and blighting influence of pagan huts, the mass of mankind must be doomed to vice and despair; for superstition is death, and the hovel is hell. A hut means heathenism, whether in Africa or America. Our mills and factories, our railroads and other public institutions, together with all unnecessary labor, are imbruting the poor, and rendering civilization and evangelization impossible. The whole land is staggering under the resultant curse, and barbarism, dense and real, holds in its remorseless grip the major-

ity of the people. Six days of incessant routine toil prohibit thought, and quench aspiration. A man who does not think is a mule—as stubborn, as irrational, and as apt to kick. A human being must have rest, recreation, opportunities for self-improvement, and above all, some high stimulus to exertion based on interests for which it is worth while to live. He should be encouraged to estimate himself above the product of his muscles, and to cherish the sentiment that he is better than a sheep and 'of more value than many sparrows.' He who does not hold himself above the sparrows, is a goose; he who does not rate himself superior to a sheep, is a dog. Our capitalists are enslaving the masses so that they cannot be reached by the emancipating influences of the Gospel. The toilers, like 'dumb driven cattle,' are too tired to attend church on Sunday, and too dispirited to heed the message of hope when they hear it. As long as our system of oppressive labor continues, the manhood of the masses must sag. The average hand employed by the mills, the mines, or the railroads, is but little more than an articulated machine performing so much work for so little pay—homeless, thoughtless, soulless, damned. It will remain an axiom, world without end, that thistles produce thistles and pagans produce pagans."

Next morning Ben Rolfe sat in his office think-

ing. Dr. Foster's report and Mr. Ernest's remarks had touched the hidden springs of his heart. As he saw the employees passing to and fro to their work, the question of labor forced itself upon his mind. There is such a vast difference, thought he, between the owner of a great plant and the almost impersonal beings that make up the factory force. Then he recalled a sermon he had heard on the previous Sabbath setting forth Christ's view of brotherhood. It all appeared to Ben Rolfe as marvelously beautiful, yet, in spite of him, as impractical as beautiful. Mr. Ernest is the only man, inwardly said the capitalist, I ever saw that I would follow blind-folded; though he says we ought not to follow any man that way. But I'm trying to model my life after the preacher in religious things; it is only in social and business matters that I part company with him. The bare idea of that good man, without a day's experience, standing up in the pulpit and telling men grown gray in successful business, how to run their factories! Then Mr. Rolfe laughed to himself as he thought of John Ernest managing a factory. Just then he looked up, and behold, the minister was hastening towards the office.

"Mr. Ernest," said Rolfe, in a good-natured way, "I'm glad to see you. I was just recalling your sermon on brotherhood; and I was trying

to fancy what would become of the Hosiery in six weeks, if I undertook to put your views into practice."

"Well, what do you think would become of it?"

"Why," said Rolfe, "there just wouldn't be any Hosiery."

"How do you figure that?" inquired the pastor.

"Well, every hand in the establishment would imagine he was a stockholder, and there wouldn't be any distinction between employer and employee."

"But, after all, don't you think, Mr. Rolfe, there is too great a chasm between capital and labor?"

"Why, my dear sir, of course there must always be a 'great gulf fixed' between wealth and poverty; yet this gulf is due to the very nature of the case. You can't blot out the space which separates an eagle that soars in the sky from a mole that burrows in the ground."

"Yes, Mr. Rolfe; but eagles and moles are distinct orders of being, so constituted by the Creator that neither can exchange places with the other. In the case of employer and employee, both are men, and both brethren, at that; and they could often, and sometimes do, exchange places, the only gulf between them being one of money or opportunity. You have right here in this Hosiery a dozen men that could, in the event of your absence, direct this great plant with suc-

cess. They know more of the practical working of the business than you do; so that, really the difference between the human eagle and the human mole is not always so great."

"I confess there is something in that, Mr. Ernest; and yet, I don't see how it would be possible to manage this plant, employing twelve hundred operatives, on the principles you advocated in your sermon."

"Deacon Rolfe," said the pastor, "let me ask you one plain question. Is your business, as conducted on its present basis, satisfactory?"

The deacon paused.

"I am free to say it is not. We have had strikes in the factory from time to time, and are continually harassed by hate and threats on the part of the operatives; in fact, the conduct of the establishment is such an intolerable worry and burden, that I am thinking seriously of making a change in my business; namely, of disposing of my plant, and investing the proceeds, even at the present low rate of interest, in United States bonds. I haven't discovered any remedy for the conflict between capital and labor. At the same time, however, I realize that the fault is not solely, perhaps not principally, with the employees; yet, in the very nature of things, capital has to be exacting and hard. In the mills, you

have to treat a man as if he were a sort of animal."

"My good Deacon," interrupted Mr. Ernest with animation, "there's your mistake. Treat a man as a man, and you will have better results."

"I know, Mr. Ernest, that according to your views, I would have to turn my factory into a sort of institutional church, and give more attention to religion than to business."

"Another mistake, my good Deacon; for religion demands more attention than business, since the spiritual is the larger sphere, and embraces the temporal. Conduct the Hosiery on Christian principles, and the perplexing problem of capital and labor will be solved; for brotherly love is the secret of business."

Ben Rolfe felt like laughing at Mr. Ernest's ideas of financial methods; but because of the high esteem in which the pastor was held, he restrained his emotions. Notwithstanding the ever increasing difficulties, the deacon had proved an eminently successful manager of the Hosiery in all of its details; and judging from the standpoint of commercialism, he had every reason to congratulate himself. Yet, there was something that prevented the work from moving on smoothly. A sordid man might have been content with magnificent gains in trade; but Ben Rolfe had accepted the religion of Jesus as his standard.

and he began now to recognize the fact that, from a moral point of view, there was something wrong about the Hosiery. John Ernest had said a moment before that love is the secret of business. The deacon saw that he had failed just here; he did not love the hands. He promptly paid them the last cent of their wages; but farther than that he showed them no consideration. He knew nothing of their homes, their struggles, their joys, their sorrows. When they were sick, he evinced no other concern than to have them back at their posts. When they died, his only care was to replace them with others. But now he resolved to apply Christianity to the workshop. The experiment might cost dear, yet he would try it. He was inclined to believe that the pastor was right in holding that the only kind of institutional church that is worth anything is the institutional factory—the *Christian workshop*. “Any how,” exclaimed he to himself, rising from his arm-chair and walking to and fro in his office, “henceforth, love shall rule the Hosiery.”

CHAPTER XXII.

LOVE RULES THE HOSIERY.

Ben Rolfe lay awake till the late hours of the night pondering the possible results of his unique experiment. His money and his reputation as a financier were both at stake. While his brain throbbed under the alternate pressure of hope and misgiving, he recalled the unmistakable injunction of Holy Writ, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." At once he sprang from his bed and pressed the electric button. He hastily outlined a crude program for the new management of the plant, involving radical changes in all of its departments. The entire scheme appeared chimerical from a financial point of view, yet Christian from a moral standard.

Saturday evening came, and the hands were filing out of the doors toward home, when the foreman reported at the office that one of the large boilers was out of order, and that it would take eight or ten hours to repair it. It had always been the custom of the factory for the carpenters and machinists to make repairs on Sunday, so as not to interfere with the work at the beginning of

the week. The foreman expected the usual order to overhaul the boiler on the Sabbath; instead, however, Mr. Rolfe said, "Detail a force of machinists to do repairs until eleven-thirty to-night; if the job can't be finished by that time, let it be resumed early Monday morning; and put the workmen on extra pay."

"But, Mr. Rolfe, that may delay all the hands for some hours; for it is impossible to say how long this ugly job will take;" said the foreman amazed.

"Then," said Rolfe, "I shall be the only loser. I don't believe it is right to drive men to work on Sunday; for love rules the Hosiery."

Monday came, and sure enough, the boiler was far from ready for the fires. Some new parts had to be fitted in, while there was a general disarrangement in the flues, which made the damage more serious than had been reported. Twelve hundred hands came at the usual hour to start the machines; and with ill-concealed discontent they learned that the work could not begin before the afternoon. These twelve hundred toilers, whose bread depended on their labor, became restless, some of them angry and boisterous. When, under similar circumstances they had lost time, their wages had been carefully docked. Now, to lose half a day was a serious matter with many. They began to blame the machinists; but when they

learned that Mr. Rolfe had refused to let the men work on the Sabbath, they became hostile in their attitude, saying hard words against the president. At one o'clock, however, the whistle blew the signal for work, and all hands were busy at their accustomed tasks. Still, there might be depicted in the faces of many of the operatives a look of unrest because they had lost, as they thought, a half day's wages needlessly. But when Saturday night came, and they received a full week's pay, they were unwontedly buoyant, and began to think better of the employer. This was a business sermon on Sabbath observance, worth more than a hundred discourses from the pulpit.

Ben Rolfe, while thoroughly devoted to the financial interests of the Hosiery, was withal tender of heart, though he had never sufficiently considered the moral aspect of business. He had accepted the usual maxims of trade without questioning their integrity; he had seen men as trees, walking; but now, with clearer vision, he saw the dignity of labor and the majesty of the laborer. He found himself mingling with the employees as never before; while they likewise showed a new interest in him—thus love was beginning to rule the Hosiery. He saw a wonderful opportunity in what John Ernest called the true sphere of the institutional church—*Christian business*. As he sat pensive in his office, he said to himself, "I

have some advantages for doing good that even ministers have not. There are churches with memberships of a thousand persons, which do well to have five hundred present one day in the week. Nearly every minister has to complain of empty pews. The weather, even, affects attendance at divine service; a snow-storm will break up a congregation; a slight cold, a morning nap, a Sunday paper, or a turkey dinner, will keep multitudes from worship; but, when I enter the Hosiery, I find the whole force present; every place is occupied; and nothing but serious sickness prevents the attendance of an employee. My hands come through snow, hail, rain, wind, mud, and heat; and I am thrown with them, not one day in seven, but six. Thus, I have the largest and most punctual congregation in Woodville—a congregation that no minister in town can reach. Some of them are practically pagans, some infidels, many indifferent to religion, others non-church-goers. John Ernest says that the pulpit must reach the world through the Christian workshop, and business men must become practical evangelists." And the deacon bent his head in prayer.

Mr. Rolfe gave order for the factory to close half an hour earlier than usual, and for the employees to assemble in what was known as the 'packing room'. He stated, with evident embar-

rassment, that he wished to make the Hosiery a pleasant home for all the hands, and that he desired to effect such changes in the management of the plant as would promote the interests of all concerned. He said that divine guidance would be necessary to the success of his plan; and an opportunity was given for voluntary prayer. Several of the older men, members of Woodville churches, offered fervent petitions for the success of the new order of things, and besought most tenderly the rich grace of God upon the head of the establishment. Tears came into the president's eyes as he felt the throbbing hearts of his employees, and now realized what the pastor meant by saying that the institutional church is business institutions conducted on Christian principles.

The president appointed a committee, approved by the whole body, selected from all classes of workers, men, women, boys, and girls, to suggest on the morrow measures conducive to the welfare of the force. This was so great a departure from his ordinary methods, and so unheard-of an experiment in factory life, that many appeared simply puzzled, while others gave way to tears.

The next day, at noon, the committee called at the office, offering its suggestions as to some changes deemed proper; mostly modest, some amusing, some impractical, others impossible; but

the purpose for which the committee had been appointed, was accomplished—there was co-operation between capital and labor.

It was a full month before Ben Rolfe outlined a complete scheme of reform for the management of the Hosiery. When the plan was made public, the president's motives were misinterpreted by the commercial fraternity. Some said he was simply advertising his factory; some said he was mentally off; others characterized the whole affair as a religious sham, detrimental to true business, and prophesied the speedy collapse of the enterprise; while the Hosiery Trust, into which Mr. Rolfe had refused to enter, was swift to spread the report that the movement had a socialistic basis. Reforms, generally, have to undergo some such fusillade of criticism, opposition and defamation, before attaining their goal, and Ben Rolfe's was no exception. There were, however, not a few who had faith both in the reformer and his reform. This is the scheme:

REGULATIONS OF THE WOODVILLE HOSIERY.

1. There shall be a moral standard in the factory. All persons accepting work shall sign a pledge to be truthful, honest, virtuous, not to swear, not to drink intoxicating liquors, not to use obscene language, and not to gamble.
2. All persons connected with the factory shall strive to promote its interests, pledging

themselves to intelligent industry.

3. All employees must declare their belief in a Supreme Being, whose will is made known in the Bible, and whose Son, the divine Christ, is the only Saviour from sin.

4. The employees shall profit as the business prospers. Dividends shall be declared to them, as the income produced by their labor increases, thus making the employees real partners in the establishment. When there is a shrinkage in the volume of trade, the employees shall share the loss, in case the president deems it necessary.

The new regulations met with unqualified approval on the part of nearly all the hands. A few said they were too strict in some particulars, and refused to sign; while several of the best carpenters and machinists took exceptions to the clause that excluded sceptics from the factory. They called on Mr. Rolfe, and made complaint.

"Boss," said the spokesman, a splendid specimen of physical manhood, and the most skilled machinist in the shop, "have you any fault to find with our work?"

"No," said the president, thoughtfully, "but I have some fault to find with your lives. You work well, but you live badly. Your influence over the hands is morally hurtful."

"Then, you want us to leave the Hosiery?"

"No;" said Mr. Rolfe; "I would rather you should leave your infidelity. I value you very

highly as workmen, but I don't see any provision the Lord Jesus has made for unbelief; and as this plant in the future is to be managed according to his will, it will offer no place to the unbeliever."

"Then," said the machinist, "what is the unbeliever to do?"

"Believe," said Mr. Rolfe.

"But suppose we can't believe."

"That is between you and God."

"You intend, I suppose, to turn the factory into a sort of mission station."

"Not exactly," said Rolfe; "but I propose to manage the factory on Christian principles; for I have, of late, come to the conclusion that the only proper business is Christian business."

"We don't object to that, Boss; but we can't sign a pledge that requires us to believe in what passes for religion in Woodville. We see churches turned into shows; sermons turned into sensational speeches, and church-members turned into varnished scamps. No, Mr. Rolfe, we don't believe in any such thing."

"Neither do I," said the capitalist; "and the Regulations do not require you to believe in any such thing. It is the Christianity of Christ you are expected to accept—the Bible record of God's purposes, will, and salvation. That is all. Now, my brother men, you know this is right. You

know there is a God who made you, and who loves you, and who has redeemed you by the blood of his Son. You know you ought to love and serve him. Now, won't you give your heart to Jesus and settle your soul's well-being once and forever?" As Rolfe asked this question with undisguised tenderness, the men looked at him with astonishment. Can this be our old employer, they seemed to say, who, though always strictly honest, used to be so exacting? He never spoke to us so before. He treated us well; but only as animals are treated. Can this really be Ben Rolfe? Is this the man who never was known to speak to one of us except about work? Now he won't let us work on Sunday, and talks to us about religion.

Deacon Rolfe knew such thoughts were passing through their minds, and asked as many of them as wanted to take the matter to God, to unite with him in prayer. Every man knelt down as the old boss led them in simple, tender petitions at the throne of grace. When they rose from their knees, there was not a dry eye—nor was there an infidel.

CHAPTER XXIII

BEN ROLFE'S INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH.

Ben Rolfe realized that he was living in a new world. Old things had passed away. The old indifference to human needs, the old disregard for the advancement of his fellow-men, and the old social caste that separated him from the great mass of begrimed toilers, had all vanished. In the new light, the distinction between the secular and the religious largely disappeared. He saw Holiness on the bells of the horses, and Christ on every spindle in the plant. As he saw his praise in the glad smile of every workman, he kept repeating in an undertone, "How sweet it is to live! Father, I thank thee that thy grace permits me to be a co-worker with thee in blessing thy toiling children!"

Mr. Rolfe set to work at once to better the condition of the working folk. He visited a number of their homes, saw what they ate, how they slept, how they lived, noted their furniture and surroundings, their society and amusements, and their sorrows. He became convinced that humanity could never be elevated amid such envir-

onments; for many of the employees were not superior to people who lived three thousand years ago. They were neither more intellectual nor more happy. Many of them had, and could have, no religion; they lived in darkness, breathed malaria, fed on poor and ill-cooked food, lived in dirty tenements, with even their bodies unwashed. The pastor is right, thought Ben Rolfe, when he says, "The homes of the masses must be improved, or the race is lost." I am satisfied that John Ernest is both preacher and philosopher.

The deacon's next step was to purchase a common of thirty acres adjoining the Hosiery, on which cattle were sometimes tethered, and on which, at other times, boys played their games of ball. The land was bought at low figures, and laid off in lots, with an open center for a park. On these lots, neat cottages were built, of different sizes and styles of architecture, painted attractively in different colors. Each had its own yard, garden, young fruit trees, and hennery fenced with wire. Rows of choice shade trees were set out in front of the dwellings, and the Park was designed by a landscape-gardener, equal in beauty to any park in the city. Numerous settees scattered over the grounds amid charming shrubbery and flowers, afforded a resort to the laborers, when not at their tasks. In the center was a spacious and tasteful pavilion, where the

factory folk met for a social hour in the evening, seeking recreation in music and games. The president employed a competent instructor to give singing-lessons to all who wished to improve their voices. Sometimes there would be three hundred in a class. A grand piano and an excellent organ were placed in the pavilion for constant use while musical instruments were provided for both a brass and a string band, composed of the employees. Once a week a lecturer was engaged, or a humorist, or a noted divine, to entertain and instruct the factory people. Sometimes arrangements were made for an entertainment by a respectable traveling troupe.

The work of building had gone on as if by magic. Hundreds of carpenters, plumbers, masons, and painters had pushed the houses to completion in an incredibly brief time. Ben Rolfe had really founded a small town of beautiful edifices, furnished with modern improvements, and lighted by electricity supplied by the Hosiery dynamos. The cottages were now ready for occupancy; and an occasion of great joy it was in the factory when the president announced that a vacation of two days would be given for moving into the new quarters. Of course some of the families owned their own homes; but most of them were only too glad to get nearer their work, and to have the advantages offered by the new

houses, at about one-half the rent they had been paying. They were quick to realize that in the reduction of their rents, their wages had really been increased. The cottages were designated as No. 1, No. 2, and so, up to No. 200. The foreman carefully located the families according to their size, and placed those not so robust, or advanced in years, nearer the factory. The employees soon felt at home, and found delight in cultivating their gardens, raising their poultry, and in beautifying their yards. Mr. Rolfe proposed to have a fair in the pavilion every year, at which prizes would be given for the finest specimens of chickens, vegetables, fruits, and for the best bread. He further offered ten prizes for the ten best suggestions for improvements in the home life, or factory life, or in the manufactured product. His purpose was to encourage thoughtfulness and to stimulate industry.

There was also among the new buildings an Infirmary, nicely fitted up with comfortable beds and easy chairs for the hands when sick, or disabled by accident. A matron, assisted by trained nurses, was in charge of the institution, with competent medical aid when needed.

In the pavilion was a Library room, heated in cold weather, containing the most wholesome reading matter in the way of books, magazines, and daily papers. Mr. Rolfe maintained that a

system of labor that employed only the hands of men, without affording exercise for their minds and hearts, reduces humanity to the sphere of mere animal life. In the Library, at stated times, met the Boys' Debating Society, and the Girls' Literary Club.

One of the most notable features of the regenerated Hosiery was the Savings Bank. It encouraged the employees to lay up a part of their earnings each week, and to become self-respecting and independent. The president often told his laborers that it is not good for a man to be without hope and without money in the world; and that something put aside for a rainy day was a stimulus to effort and happiness.

Hardly less important is the Reception-room in the pavilion. Neatly carpeted and furnished, with provision for music and games, it became the popular resort for the young men and women of the factory; and here, not infrequently, a courtship or a marriage takes place. The elder folk often receive their town visitors in the Reception-room, whose walls are beautifully papered, and adorned with tasteful and inspiring pictures, presenting a cozy, homelike appearance.

The great Dining-hall in the Hosiery would perhaps be the most interesting feature of social life at the factory. The hall is daintily frescoed, and furnished with tables and chairs for the ac-

commodation of twelve hundred persons; and is beautified with pictures, flowers, vines, and bright rugs. Here a hot lunch is served on work-days, saving the weary toilers the extra care of getting a warm dinner, or the pain of eating a cold one. The lunch varies somewhat from day to day, always having hot coffee, and generally sandwiches and fruits, or pies. Since the lunch is furnished by the company, it is equivalent to another rise in the wages. Connected with the Dining-hall are two spacious Dressing-rooms, one for males, the other for females, provided with numerous wash-basins, racks, mirrors, and combs and brushes—all calculated to foster cleanliness and self-regard. As the employees take their seats at the table, the blessing is invoked by some Christian laborer, on invitation of the foreman. Quite often Mr. Rolfe himself takes lunch with the operatives, and always adds pleasure to the hour which has become one of the most joyous in all the hours of factory life.

Nor did the president neglect the religious interests of his employees. The hands hold a prayer-meeting at the pavilion one night in the week, and a Sunday-school on Sabbath afternoons. These services are well attended, and often result in conversions. The singing is excellent, rendered by a choir made up entirely of factory voices. Thus the Hosiery has become

what John Ernest called an institutional church, and does more towards spreading the Gospel, and building up the Kingdom of Christ, than nine-tenths of the churches of Woodville. The problem of reaching the masses has been solved, and the Christianity of Christ embodied in business.

From a financial point of view, the new regime is a success. The intelligence of the hands is promoted, their efficiency increased, their moral character elevated, and their work better done. The factory's reputation for honest goods keeps its spindles busy, when like plants are idle. In the same time the hands do more work, because better cared for, and because all the motives that control hearts and brains are active. Ben Rolfe saw that a happy man can accomplish more than an unhappy one. And then, there are no riots or strikes or losses from changing hands; for the Hosiery has become the most pleasant of homes, and seldom does an employee wish to leave it. Yes; it is a success; the work is better, the prices better, the wages better, the homes better, the people better, and Ben Rolfe is better. Indeed, the president says he derives more good from the change of management than the employees do; while John Ernest adds, that Deacon Rolfe does more to evangelize Woodville than forty commercial evangelists shouting night after night their metallic hallelujahs.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WAGES OF SOCIETY IS DEATH.

In his morning sermon, Mr. Ernest said: "The crime of the Church is, that it has not given to the world Christian society. It has established colleges and benevolent institutions for the poor, the blind, and the aged. It has built hospitals for the sick and the injured. It has made every civilized land vocal with sacred songs. It has crowned literature with the Bible. It has girdled the globe with missions. But it has failed to foster a distinct society for its own members. As no other organization, it teaches mankind to change their lives, yet offers no social environment for the life when changed. Men become children of light, to remain among the sons of darkness; children of God, to seek their joys with the offspring of Satan; heirs of glory, to find their amusements with the votaries of shame. Christianity gets its moral code and systematic theology from heaven, while it borrows its society from the world. The social standard of the sanctuary is identical in form and scope with that of the unregenerated community, which places its coronet on the brow of

money, and pays homage to the divinities of the dance, the card-party and the theatre. In spirit and purpose Christian and worldly society are one, without a protest. Christianity offers religion to the sinner, but no religious society. It says, 'take my faith, and I will take your works; bow down before God, and I will bow down before Mammon; be Christian, and I will be worldly; be true in the inner life, and I will be false in the outer life; come out of the world into the church, and I will go out of the church into the world; be like me, and I will be like you.' The qualifications for society disqualify a person for the church. Among fashionable requirements are wealth, titles, acquaintance with low amusements, familiarity with light, and even stained literature, and a prayerless spirit. Character is at a discount. A woman soiled by divorce may be queen of fashion; a gay Lothario may be a social prince. Society does not raise a barrier against infidelity, does not place the ban on political fraud, and does not exclude dishonesty, if the scale of operations be large enough. The world has been somewhat influenced by the church, but the church has been influenced more by the world. There is to-day no such thing as *Christian* society; and this appears the more incredible in view of the fact that, in a certain sense, the church sprang out of Christ's social nature. When but twelve years of

age he was so sociable that he left his mother and remained in the temple conversing with the doctors of the law. At the very beginning of his ministry, his first step was to call about him a band of disciples, Peter, James, John, and others, who became his life-long companions. He had to have friends, and wrought miracles to win the love of men. He formed his companions into a church, that is, a religious society, which he called his bride. Christ was intensely social; made friends everywhere, and of all sorts of people. He took little children in his arms, let John put his head on his bosom, let a penitent woman wash his feet with tears, and was a friend of publicans and sinners. He gave us baptism to denote our union with him; he ordained the Lord's supper that we might feast and commune with him. There is a rich social feature in all the worship of the sanctuary. In hymns, you sing his praise, and he listens. In prayer, you speak with him; and in the Scriptures, he speaks with you. This companionship, moreover, continues in heaven; for the saints are represented as reigning with him and as being forever with the Lord. So John summed up the whole matter when he said, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'

"Now," said John Ernest in conclusion, "when Christ founded the church, he established society.

Of this regenerated fellowship, character is the standard. To belong to it, you must abandon the world's measures and customs, and lead a life entirely apart from that of the unregenerated elite, which, at best, is but the gilded shell of paganism. The church must create its own social sphere, with the dance, the card-party, the theatre, and the wine-dinner omitted. Society as at present constituted, is selfish and cruel. The social trust is as heartless as the Tobacco Trust. Whether consisting of four or four hundred, it ignores or crushes every man that comes in its way, no matter how gifted or how honest. We think of Bonaparte as a human monster, crushing communities under the feet of his resistless legions, sacrificing his fellow-men to his vaulting ambition; yet the same spirit is shown in the exclusiveness of society, that regards the great toiling masses of mankind as animals on whose necks it may tread at will, for the crime of earning their bread—and often the leaders of this coterie are called Christians!

"When persons enter the church, they should at the same time enter a fellowship so sweet, so noble, so Christian, that they will not desire to return to the world for companionship and sympathy; the poor should not be set aside, the outcasts should not be trampled on; but all should feel the uplifting influence of those who have better

advantages. Make the most of every one that comes into the church; take him into your fellowship, mingle with him socially, hold him up as he stretches his soiled hands towards the skies. The Kingdom cannot come till Christian society comes. Then, throw to the moles and the bats your pride, your immoral books and pictures, your low-necked dresses and ball costumes, and your decanters and theatre-tickets, and help your fellow-Christians, less fortunate than you, to rise in the social scale of life."

After the benediction, a handsome woman dressed according to the demands of the most exacting fashion, with jeweled hands, quietly and almost unobserved, crossed the aisle, drying her eyes with her richly embroidered handkerchief, and shook hands with the pastor.

"*Mr. Ernest,*" said Mrs. James, "having been fatally intimate with the ways of society, I can say with some authority that you never delivered a truer message than the sermon of this morning—but it is too late to help me!" And there was a minor quaver in her voice, and a wild glare in her eyes.

The congregation passed out of the church promptly, and the old sexton swung the great doors together, not knowing that a lady had remained in the edifice.

Tearing a fly-leaf from a hymn-book, Mrs. James wrote as follows:

To Grand Avenue Church:

When I came to service this morning, I intended to retire from life privately at my own home; but after hearing the sermon, I resolved to illustrate the solemn truths the pastor uttered. Since I accomplished no good while living, I may be of some service when dying.

It will doubtless be a surprise to my friends when I say that I leave the world because society has poisoned my heart and blighted my life. As you too well know, I was a leader in fashionable circles, proud of my position and influence. I was prominent in nearly all the social functions of Woodville, a patroness of the city's gaieties, and, during Dr. Arlington's ministry, a pillar in Grand Avenue Church. Of course, I was not a Christian—but then, none of our churches, and no minister except Mr. Ernest, requires members to be Christians. As the pastor so clearly demonstrated, the church had no distinct fellowship outside of congregational meetings, and I drifted into the vortex of fashion, to get my society where all Christians get theirs—in the domain of the Prince of darkness. What is called the *world* can offer us nothing. Like the fabled vampire, it sucks the blood while fanning its victim with its wings. It stifles modesty and destroys virtue. Its motto is, eat, drink, and be merry. Its shibboleth is money, and its reward is despair.

It was cruel society that broke the tie that

bound me to my husband. When he needed sympathy, I showed only heartlessness. When he needed a friend, I became an enemy. When he needed help, I became a hindrance. When he needed a wife, I deserted him. When he became true, I became false. I loved the world more than the church, and society more than my husband.

It was society that made me forget; and I formed an alliance which I now dissolve on the black altar of Mors.

Mrs. James laid her confession on the pulpit Bible, and sat down in the minister's great arm-chair on the rostrum. After she had fingered at her auburn tresses, and arranged the folds of her dress, she placed a white tablet in her lips.

Shades and dreams—she beheld the gay procession of Woodville's *elite* passing before her in dancing costume. The rhythm of quick music—Golden lights flashed on proud men and ambitious women, and the beauty of youth—Jewelry sparkled, so did the wine—The gorgeous pageant responded to the notes of stringed instruments—All hearts were merry, and all knees bowed to Bacchus—All forgot God—In passionate embrace, amorous couples swung to and fro over the waxed floor through delirious hours—Husbands alienated, wives betrayed, youth soiled—The birth or amours, the death of love—These human phantoms swung and reeled and panted—

Hearts crushed, homes blighted—Modesty vanished, virtue stained, marriage vows broken—The shadows thicken—The music sounds afar—The ghosts recede—The cry of the lover—The sigh of the husband—The wail of the wife—Despair with sable wings—The sting of death!

The evening congregation was pouring rapidly into the church, but in the dim light of the few bulbs that as yet were doing service, the pulpit flanked with flowers effectually concealed the pastor's chair from the audience. When Mr. Ernest stepped upon the rostrum, the full electric current flowed on; and as he turned to take his seat, he stopped, threw up both hands, and exclaimed, "Great Heavens! Mrs. James!"



"The Wages of Society is Death."



CHAPTER XXV.

THE PERIL OF THE BROWNSTONE FRONT.

Corinne Howard had rapidly developed into a superb missionary to the outcasts. At first she was a bit awkward as she moved among conditions entirely new to her, but soon she readily adjusted herself to the needs of submerged humanity. The church had placed at her disposal nine hundred dollars of the amount contributed by Col. James, of which she had expended seven hundred in assisting the poor families of Purgatory. Chronic cases of sickness were removed to the hospitals or sent to suitable "homes," while orphans, forsaken children, idiots, and lunatics were placed in asylums founded for them by the munificence of the citizens. Wives, forsaken or divorced by brutal husbands, were put in a position to earn their own living; who, thus encouraged to turn their backs to the unhappy past, faced the future with renewed hope. It need not, therefore, excite surprise that Corinne won, by means of her self-sacrificing love, the splendid title of "The Angel of Purgatory." Nor need it be said that she was never happier than when she

trudged from flat to flat, followed by a flock of the wee tots of the alleys, catching hold of her hands, getting in the way of her feet, all the while asking the oddest questions.

But now, others than neglected waifs began to attract her attention. A greater question presented itself to her mind. She had thought of wickedness as breeding mainly in tenement houses and saloons, but Mrs. James' tragic death and fearful arraignment of the social fabric, brought to light the astounding fact that the brownstone front and the grand opera have proved nests of iniquity involving graver problems than even the slums.

This revulsion of feeling was due in part to the impassioned address delivered in Grand Avenue Church on the occasion of Mrs. James' funeral. With plainness of speech that stunned and pathos that burned, Mr. Ernest thus indicted wickedness in high places: "In the experience of Mrs. L. R. James we read the signs of a corrupt age. Degeneracy reigns in the cultured and wealthy circles of Woodville. We are daily facing in so-called best society a paganism as hopeless and forbidding as Paul met in his missionary tours nineteen centuries ago. The trend of thought, the business methods, the social life, the natural affections, and the moral standards of the college and the brownstone front do not compare

favorably with many heathen communities. The religious instincts in man are not deader in the nomad tribes of central Africa than in the luxurious palaces of America. Purity cannot grow in cesspools, and honor cannot thrive in hotbeds of hypocrisy. The gilded gods of superficial learning and the shrines of mammon must be buried under the heels of Christ before the race can be redeemed."

Then the preacher paused, and taking a paper from his pocket said, "Current literature reeks with putridity. It is ever poisoning the minds of unthinking millions with silly and disgusting errors; yet, in the light of this fact, we may clearly discover that the 'perilous times' foretold by the Apostle have come. The frequency of these errors indicate that Christianity is disintegrating, and that without a fundamental and wide-spread movement back to Christ, Christendom will revert in fifty years to heathenism or infidelity. Let me read," continued the speaker, "several extracts, all taken from a single issue of a Chicago daily." Thus he read:

THE CITY BREATHLESS OVER THE RESULT.

Excitement and interest over the great Jeffries-Johnson fight among all fashionable circles of the city were unparalleled. At the millionaire club, nothing was discussed in the smoke-room except the contest. At Oil University class work was

suspended for an hour while both professors and students scanned the latest telegrams from Reno. In the department of theology, one of the professors took occasion to say to his pupils that the only real mind is that of man, and that it is the end of man to contend in fair and honorable battle with his fellows and not to waste his energies in fighting a fictitious devil."

NEWPORT SOCIETY BETS ON FIGHT.

At divine service last evening, three ministers chose as the themes of their sermons the Jeffries-Johnson fight. The superintendent of the most fashionable Sunday-school in the city prayed that the white man might win. Talk of the fight in the most exclusive circles took precedence at all social entertainments, including dances, dinners, and cards.

Mrs. Jacob Hirsch, who gave a dinner dance, had "flash" dispatches of the fight, and lost heavily, as did many wealthy ladies who bet on Jeffries.

THE NEWEST RELIGION.

The newest place of worship in Chicago, to be erected in a few weeks by an incorporated group of millionaire sports and university professors, will be known as the "Church of Happiness." The new church will be known for music, merriment, laughter, and culture.

The old hell of the old religion, with its flaming fires, its dancing imps in leather hides and hoofs, its catacombs of bones and dead hopes, its fumes of sulphur, is a thing of the past.

The new religion recognizes that crime is hatched where there is no mirth. Depravity

flourishes in the shades of darkness. Indifference to unpleasant things, and ecstasy in other things, will characterize the latest faith. There will be no fear, no responsibility, and no service except such as redounds to one's own pleasure.

This unique idea originated in the fertile brain of Prof. Summers, dean of theology in Oil University. The professor gives as the reason for the new creed the fact that people don't care what the Bible teaches any more, as the morality of the Scriptures was written for the ancient days. "Nobody," claims he, "has ever done what the Bible says. What men always have done, if they tried to do right, was to conform to the morals of the group and the time." In an interview with our reporter, Dr. Summers declared that Oil University had discarded Christianity, and that its religious trend was now Buddhistic. He asserted further that he had been told by *Hindoos* that the great obstacle to the spread of Christianity in their country was the puerility of our dogma of creation; and he added that most of the members of the University faculty were ready to side with *Hinduism* in this matter. Dr. Summers closed the interview by quoting with marked approbation from a lecture delivered at Manchester by Professor James, as follows: "The theological machinery that spoke so livingly to our ancestors with its finite age of the world, its creation out of nothing, its judicial morality and eschatology, its treatment of God as an external contriver, an intelligent and moral governor, sounds as odd to most of us as if it were some outlandish savage religion."

As Mr. Ernest finished his sermon laying bare the infidelity of many colleges and the corruption of Woodville's Smart Set, Corinne experienced strange and sometimes even conflicting emotions. She had given her energies exclusively to the slums, but now it dawned upon her mind—a sickening, terrible fact—that at her very doors there lay a field as appalling, as depraved, as Christless and as needy as the most sin-cursed sections of Purgatory. Two vast extremes, widely apart, but equally degenerate. Marble steps had ever proved a barrier to mission effort, and were never climbed by preachers, save John Ernest, except when they led to a social function or a fine dinner.

Corinne returned to her home dazed. The outlook was dark; society was diseased; and it seemed to her that as mankind prospers in material things, unless the Bible is accepted as the standard of morals, the race degenerates into paganism. Pondering these disagreeable but manifest truths in her aching heart, she resolved to become a missionary, for a month, to the fashionable circles of the city.

Miss Howard began her missionary labors among the "four hundred" in the spirit of the Master. She gave tracts to those that would receive them, talked to others of Christ, told them of his love, how he came to earth to save the lost, explained the meaning of repentance, and point-

ed to the awful doom of all that obey not the gospel of God. A few heard her story and promised amendment of life, but the great majority laughed at the message she brought, and scarcely any had a just conception of the mission of the Son of God. It was quite true that occupants of the brownstone fronts generally, in part at least, were members of fashionable churches, but the idea of regeneration was to them the shadowiest figment.

The faithful worker, weary and heartsick, had well-nigh concluded her loving task in the "upper" circles of the city, when she painfully remembered one home she felt constrained to visit. That home was on the most beautiful and aristocratic avenue of Woodville. And the most charming mansion on this exquisite boulevard was the residence of Major Whitney, the railroad magnate, whose millions stood well up in the forties. As Corinne gazed admiringly on the splendid grounds adorned with monuments and nude statuary—the grounds being the object of her admiration, not the statuary—she hesitated. That palatial pile, erected at a cost of two millions, produced misgivings as to any success attending her visit. She climbed the marble steps slowly and rang the bell. She was ushered into a parlor which was a bower of beauty and elegance. She beheld beveled mirrors reaching to the ceiling, pic-

tures purchased from the great galleries of European capitals at fabulous prices, and costly curios gathered from all lands; and as she scanned this rich display of wealth, she could but wonder whether mammon had shut Christ out of this princely home.

When Mrs. Whitney entered, her fingers flashing with diamonds, a necklace of pearls hanging nearly to her waist, and her Parisian dress rustling the praises of the modiste, Corinne could but recall Arnold's lines,

“What lady is this, whose silk attire,
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire?”

The high priestess of the social circle took her seat in a silk plush rocker, asking indifferently, “Miss Howard, what will you have?”

“Mrs. Whitney,” said Corinne. “I want you.”

“Beg pardon, I don't understand you, Miss.”

“Then, let me explain. You perhaps know that Mr. Ernest, our pastor, is striving to reinstate the Christianity of Christ in Woodville, and that he has met, in spite of formidable opposition, success among all classes except our most fashionable people. He is now making an effort to evangelize those who have most influence in our social life. He thinks that if our leading citizens can be won to the cross, the cause of a pure religion will triumph in Woodville.”

"Why, Miss Howard, you surprise me," said the rich woman with ill-disguised impatience. "You surely have come to the wrong place. I am a Christian, and have been one all my life. Of course I do not hold to Mr. Ernest's vagaries—poor man, he is really crazy."

"Mrs. Whitney, do you think Jesus was crazy?"

"Well, not just that, but I think he was impractical. He taught many things that nobody can obey."

"I had not thought so; will you please name one of them?"

"Well, he says that we should forsake all and follow him. That is impossible. It is unreasonable to expect us to put the dark, dim, distant Kingdom of God first when there is so much that appeals to us in quite a different line. Persons who have not the ability to gratify their longings, may not understand me, but to those who have, the world offers attractions the church knows nothing of."

Corinne sighed and replied, "I have tried both, and the joy of serving Christ is the greatest I have ever known."

"Yes, Miss Howard, your means, I presume, are limited; you do not really know what the world is, nor the sweetness of its pleasures. Your joys consist largely in attending prayer-meetings and funerals, whereas mine are more rational

and hence more natural. For instance, when I am out riding in my auto, the companionship of my French bulldog gives me exquisite pleasure. Poor little fellow, he ought to, for he cost me a round \$7,000. Then, when I am shut in, I have my divine Tom, whose noble pedigree goes back a hundred years to the purest Maltese stock. You have a missionary society, while I give a cat party to which all of Tom's friends are invited, each plate costing \$20, and served by the best caterers. Then," continued Mrs. Whitney, flushing, "I have other pleasures that the church does not approve, which, nevertheless, are intense and human."

Corinne perceived that Mrs. Whitney was about to reveal something, and, like a physician who wishes to discover the disease in order to apply the remedy, she adroitly asked, "My dear madam, be kind enough to tell me what legitimate pleasures the church condemns?"

"Legitimate!" exclaimed the queen of Woodville's society, and then broke out into a burst of laughter. "Why, it meddles with the affairs of our hearts, and places a guard over our consciences."

Corinne, observing the evident embarrassment of the rich woman, said, in a reassuring manner, "Mrs. Whitney, you may confide in me or not as you please, but will you permit me to inquire—Is

there not some great secret in your life?"

"Miss Howard, your character inspires confidence, yet there is a mysterious fascination about some secrets which departs when a third party is admitted. I am free to say that I shall divulge a part only of my hidden life to you. I have long since desired to converse with some reliable person on the subject, and I hope I shall not annoy you."

Corinne assured the woman that she would be pleased to hear whatever she saw fit to state, and would render her any help possible.

"Well, this is my story—you would say wicked, I say romantic. Some years ago, at a public ball, intimacies began between another and myself, which later ripened into spiritual harmonies. (Corinne threw up her hands in horror). When Major Whitney and I were married, he knew nothing of this, and does not know now."

"You should inform him at once!" interrupted Corinne with a degree of impatience not hitherto manifested.

"No," calmly answered Mrs. Whitney. "The Major has his harmonies too, but has never mentioned the matter to me. When we were married, he admired me for my vivacity and looks; I was attracted by his fortune. There was never any high, holy love between us, only an adaptation of beauty to gold. Of course we drifted apart. He

became infatuated with another, while I, on my part, found my affinity. I believe the same standard should apply to the man as to the woman, for both of us are living double lives. Society does not condemn him, nor should it me."

"But if society were Christian, it would condemn you both. There should be the same moral standard for both sexes, not with a view of putting the woman on an equality with the man, but of putting the man on an equality with the woman. In other words, when guilty of the same offense, both sexes should be held equally responsible at the bar of public opinion."

"Now, Miss Howard, I did not ask for a sermon, but was just telling you in a rather incoherent way a bit of my personal history."

"Very well," said Corinne; "I shall not interrupt you again; for I assure you, I feel quite interested in your life-story."

"As I was going to say, wedlock does not mean to us what it does to Grand Avenue Church since Mr. Ernest remodeled its moral code. No, we have grown larger, freer, and allow greater familiarity between the sexes. The passions are permitted to have fuller scope. There's a place for the charm of an affinity. The marriage tie is binding only so long as pleasant and convenient. Inasmuch as the home is in somewhat unstable equilibrium, our best society does not wish to be

encumbered with children. I discover, Miss Howard, that you shudder. But be patient. I notice that my mind is wandering, but I think I can give you the reason for our objection to families. Let me take my medicine first." Here the leader of fashion swallowed her dope, and then resumed her rambling story with increased animation. "Yes, I believe we were talking about children. We are just too busy to have them. They increase the burdens of the home, without adding to its pleasure. We must have some ease and a little rest, you know, for we are constantly giving and attending functions. The formalities of fashion are so exacting that we have not time for the rearing of children. And then since it is always uncertain how long we shall keep our husbands, we naturally regard offspring as a handicap. We prefer poodles, cats, canaries, and—affinities. Children are in the way—I'm sure you understand. We would rather be sweethearts than wives.

"And besides," continued the magnate's consort, taking another white pellet, "there are elaborate entertainments which all wealthy people are expected to give; and these require all the time and care we can bestow. A successful function is the acme of social ambition, while to fail is to die on the altar of fashion. I wish to read you the ac-

count in this morning's paper of my splendid function given last evening:

BAREFOOT DANCE AT MRS. WHITNEY'S.

Countess Camura de Gwisky danced barefoot last night before Woodville society at the most remarkable private entertainment of the season. When the company before which she appeared had indorsed by rapturous applause the verdict of Arcturo Tuscanino, that the Countess has the most beautiful musical body in the world, she made her acknowledgments by performing on the piano Rochmanhoff's famous prelude as only a virtuoso can do, to the further amazement and delight of her select audience.

Mrs. Haraldine Whitney gave society this opportunity to enjoy the gifts of the Russian titled visitor. There were two hundred invitations and nearly all the leaders of society attended. Mrs. Whitney built a ball-room for the occasion, overlooked by the galleries of the second floor of her cottage and by the windows of other rooms where the guests sat. The decorations were of oak branches, studded with American Beauty roses and lilies, that scheme prevailing all over the stage, even under the porte-cochere.

The Countess bounded in upon this scene to the stirring measures of Dvorak's "Russian Dance" and thrilled the spectators with her whole-hearted abandon. Her dress was scant and diaphanous, but the rhythmic figure chained all attention. Next she presented a scene from her favorite "Tanagra," in which grace and spirit

combined to produce the poetry of motion. Her piano-playing followed the dance.

After this introduction she will probably appear at other private entertainments and also in public. Mrs. Whitney has invited the actress to repeat the entertainment next Sunday evening, the proceeds to be given to charity.

When the rich woman laid down the paper, she was overcome by stupor, and threw her head back in her cushioned chair, gently nodding.

Corinne arose to take her leave, and aroused Mrs. Whitney, who sprang to her feet, the central figure of Woodville's gilded paganism, saying confusedly, "Miss Howard, I think I spoke to you of my divine affinity; here he is."

And Mrs. Whitney drew from her bosom a picture of Mason Saunders.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“SOCIETY IS PAGAN!”

The Reform movement swept over Woodville like a great moral conflagration, consuming the idols of a veneered society and destroying the hiding places of vice. This proved what Christianity can do in a town when those who profess it simply become Christians.

In good soil, the Gospel seed that John Ernest had been sowing were taking deep root. It was “Commencement” week at Woodville College and the evening on which the annual ball took place. This function given in honor of the graduating class, had for years been esteemed the one crowning event of the season. No pains were spared to make it a brilliant success, no efforts were wanting to attract the *elite* of the city. The great College hall became the trysting place where the belles of Woodville displayed their beauty; fashionable women, their wardrobe; and wealthy Venerables their jewelry. Society girls vied with one another in the elaborateness of their costumes, the splendor of their diamonds, and the witchery of their coquetry. The professors’ wives, together with the most fashionable ladies in the





Maud Blalock, entering the room leaning on her father's arm, was the cynosure of all admiring eyes.

town, were patronesses, so that to be absent was to suffer a social eclipse. The music for the dances was furnished by a New York orchestra, while the college Mandolin Club gave entertainment between sets. The refreshments were abundant, the service elegant, and the orgies often continued till the light of day.

The Mandolin Club was dispensing its gayest strains amid the dazzling blaze of electric lamps, when Maud Blalock walked into the college hall. Her handsome figure and graceful bearing elicited comment on every side. A number of the graduate students at once approached, and requested the honor of a dance with her during the evening, while admirers from the city were not slow in pressing a like suit. Miss Blalock would have been the center of attraction in any group of women. Tall, graceful, intelligent, beautiful, she was, in every way, a charming personality. Conversation lulled as she, with the rhythm of the music, moved across the ball-room floor leaning lightly on her father's arm, the cynosure of all admiring eyes. She was confessedly the most splendidly attired and the most beautiful woman at the ball; and naturally her acquaintance had been sought by every aspiring young gentleman in Woodville, while a score of wealthy and brilliant suitors had laid their hearts on the altar of Cupid.

Edward Preston, son of the president of the College, and the valedictorian in a large class of graduates, claimed the first waltz with Miss Blalock. Young Preston was fine-looking rather than handsome, and was considered by the faculty as one of the most gifted students ever enrolled in the institution. As the orchestra sounded the first note of the waltz, half a hundred couples, locked in close embrace, swung around the room, with the flash of cold diamonds without, and the surging of heated blood within. The wild maze continued until the heads of giddy dancers swam, and their bodies staggered from exhaustion. At length the weird whirl ceased, with Maud's head resting on Edward Preston's bosom. She seemed to be dreaming—where was she? What was she doing? Would she like to analyze the feelings that had been aroused? What did it all mean? Then she remembered John Ernest's burning words. "The round dance is immoral"—the dream broke, the vision faded, she knew something, she sat down. The trembling girl, smitten by the thongs of an upbraiding conscience, glanced over the spacious room. The people that stood highest in Woodville were not there. She stared at the Bacchanalians, and among them recognized Major Spook, the public violator of the Sabbath; Mr. Stuart, the banker, who united with the church without conviction; Mason

Saunders, who had dishonored his church relations; the sons of the unscrupulous editor of the "Echo"; and Mr. Bowen, champion of unclean art. Why was not Dr. Foster, the most skilled physician in the city, there? Why were not the sons and daughters of Senator Kent, Mayor Joe Peterson, and Judge Castleberry, there? Why was not Corinne Howard, the brightest ornament in the social life of Woodville, there? Why was she, Maud Blalock, there? Again, she glanced at the revellers—she noted, as never before, the coarse, carnal faces of the men, the immodest costumes of the women; and within herself she said Mr. Ernest is right—*Society is Pagan!* She cancelled twenty engagements for dances, and retired from the ball-room. Her father being a trustee of the College, remained.

Maud Blalock took a carriage, ordering the coachman to stop at Grand Avenue Church. She leaned back upon the heavy upholstering, bowed her head, and wept. She felt as a criminal, stealing from the place of her misdoing. She had forgotten her most sacred vows to follow Christ, and had become a stumbling-block in the way of sinners. Loving the world and the things of the world, her soul had lost its highest joy. She had voluntarily placed herself in the vortex of ruin; her most delicate sensibilities had been blunted; she had done violence to the holy instincts of her

sex—the purity of womanhood had been soiled. She wrung her hands in agony, and her lips quivered in prayer. The coach stopped, and the penitent girl entered the lecture-room of Grand Avenue Church.

It was prayer-meeting night, and the delightful service had drawn to a close, after having extended more than half an hour beyond the usual limit. John Ernest was just rising to pronounce the benediction, as Maud Blalock, with undisguised agitation, went rapidly forward, and faced the congregation. Her cheeks were deeply crimsoned, her eyes wet with tears, her lips tremulous. As the beautiful girl stood there, arrayed in her magnificent ball costume, her bosom and hands blazing with diamonds, before the saintliest people in Woodville, by her side the most spiritual minister in the State, the situation, in its contrasts, shadings, and even contradictions, was indeed most weird. Maud tried to speak, but choked; she made a second effort, but again speech fled. At length, she knelt down and hid her face, while the congregation, thrilled as by the touch of God, sang

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd’st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!”

When two hundred subdued voices rendered the last stanza,

"Just as I am,—thy love unknown,
Has broken every barrier down:
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Maud rose to her feet, and in broken utterance said, "Those lines express my inmost yearning; I wish to be Christ's and Christ's alone. I have asked my Father's forgiveness, and now I want to ask yours. I have sought my society outside of the church, and, in consequence, have had my religious life darkened. I attended the College ball this evening, anticipating peculiar pleasure; but while I was dancing a waltz, my conscience was awakened, and I discovered the shame of the dance, and the utter barrenness of society. I felt that my heart would break unless I came at once here and confessed my sin. I love my Saviour, I love my church; and henceforth I shall renounce the world's frosted society, and seek my service and happiness in Christian fellowship alone. Believe me, as I stand before God, I promise my pastor and my brethren that I shall never enter a ball-room again."

As Maud sat down, a lady in the rear of the

room, the wife of a leading merchant in Woodville, rose, and said with great modesty: "If the pastor will pardon me, I should like to make a statement, which I think it would be wrong, under the circumstances, to suppress. I have been long concerned on the subject of religion, but have had grave doubts respecting its reality. I have fallen into a habit, all too common, of looking at other people's faults rather than my own. I have seen Christians and sinners so blended in their social life that I was unable to distinguish between them. The church and the world, so far as I could discern, loved the same pleasures, engaged in the same pursuits, lived the same life, without any line of demarkation separating them. I have desired for years to unite with the church, but I did not take the step for the reason that it seemed to offer no help in leading a better life. I found myself arguing this way: Christians claim to be born again, to be the children of God, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; yet, in actual life, they do not appear to be superior to other people who seek to be respectable. I naturally doubted the work and the influence of the Spirit in the human soul; for, persons whom I knew, were as unselfish, as honorable, and as pure as those who claim the gifts and graces of the Comforter. My faith in the Christian religion was shaken. I said, It does not really make its followers better any

more than does a reading-club, or a debating-society, or a sewing-circle. But recently I heard Mr. Ernest's sermon on Christian society, which so fully coincided with my views of the Saviour's teaching, that the church has appeared to me in a new light; and I came here this evening to find out how the pastor's views were working in his own congregation. I knew that this is the night both for the prayer-service and also for the College ball; and I was anxious to ascertain which offers the greater attraction to Christians, prayer or the dance. My faith was strengthened when I beheld here the best people in all the city. But I came to a positive decision to confess Christ, only when Miss Blalock entered the meeting and renounced the pleasures of wicked society. I now believe that the Spirit of God does what the world cannot do, what the unaided soul cannot do, gives victory over sin. I wish the young lady to know that the stand I now take for Christ and the church, is due to her testimony."

Maud Blalock, in diamonds and illusion, walked to the back of the room and knelt by the lady who had just spoken; and there was unbroken silence till from walls and ceiling rang the music of that stirring hymn,

“Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.”

When Maud reached home, she went into the drawing-room, and gathering up a dozen packs of cards, which had just been purchased for an evening of progressive euchre, to which her fashionable friends had been invited, she cast them into the kitchen range, and watched them blacken and smoulder to ashes. Then she took a course of theatre-tickets, and having subjected them to the same destructive process, retired. It had been an evening of revolution in the life of Maud Blalock. The last tie that bound her to the world was now broken. Her soul had escaped from the snare of carnal society, and henceforth she would seek no fellowship out of the fold of the redeemed. The church hereafter would mean more than it ever had meant to her; Christianity would control her life and shape her plans, and furnish her amusements. She had taken the step that subordinated the world to Christ, and had her first experience in the supreme joy of consecration and in the full triumph of faith. She resolved to revoke at once the invitations to the euchre-party, and never again to consent to the introduction of anything unchristian into her home. So resolving, she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MAUD BLALOCK REVOLUTIONIZES HER HOME.

When Maud appeared next morning at breakfast, Mr. Blalock very naturally asked an explanation of her strange disappearance from the dancing-hall.

"Father," answered the newly awakened girl, "I wish never to recall the College ball except as a deformed memory. I am a member of the church, and yet I have been living as a pagan. My Christian character has suffered from sinful associations; but, from this time on, I shall give my energies to the church, and seek companionship only in religious circles. I have accepted Mr. Ernest's interpretation of society, and shall henceforth conform my relations to it. Since my decision, I have become so much happier than I ever was before. How completely I have been blinded by the god of this world! But the leaden scales have fallen from my eyes, and now I see. I never knew until just recently what the Apostle meant by 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' " And her face brightened as she spoke these words.

"But, Maud," said her father gravely, "don't you know that there is no such thing as distinctive Christian society?"

"And, yet, Father, Mr. Ernest claims that the church, as established by Jesus, was just such a society."

"But, my daughter, that is far from being the case now."

"Then, Father, the church has become false to its high mission; and it is the duty of every Christian to make untiring efforts to restore primitive conditions."

"My darling child, this is but another of our pastor's visionary theories. And when we see a social fabric, which has been slowly and strongly woven through ages of human progress, recognized by pulpit and pew alike, and by all the great literatures of the world, and further, upheld by orators, scholars, and statesmen, we should be slow to reject it."

"True, Father; and I have been very slow to take a stand. I have considered well the arguments you present. But has human progress been so great along social lines? It seems to me that what is recognized as society, is, as Mr. Ernest says, but gilded paganism. Its standards are low, and even false. Its measure is gold, its crown is fashion, its end is pleasure, and its ideals are misshapen, and the world's literature that up-

holds it is not equal to the literature of the Bible that condemns it. And what are the orators, scholars and statesmen compared with the prophets and apostles, and, above all, our divine Saviour?"

Feeling the force of his daughter's logic, Mr. Blalock did not attempt a refutation, but replied wearily: "My dear girl, I fear you are the dupe of a visionary minister who has planted his theological feet on the baseless fabric of a dream."

"Mr. Ernest visionary, Father? Why, he is the most practical preacher in Woodville. He has transformed Purgatory, broken the saloon power, is now reforming Grand Avenue Church, and making all classes of our people think. Father, let's become visionaries."

"Maud, do you mean that you are going out of society?"

"Oh, no, Father; I mean that I am going into society; for I believe the church alone can furnish proper social relations."

"I wish, Daughter, you would explain this new notion about society. I confess I can't get hold of it, somehow."

"Well, I understand Mr. Ernest to mean that Christians ought not to be worldly; hence, they should not seek their amusements in institutions controlled by worldly principles. Their ideals, joys, and work should be determined by the

Scriptures alone. They should live totally different lives from the unsaved; they should work among the wicked but have companionship among the righteous. They should form a society entirely separate from the ungodly. There should be an unmistakable line of demarkation between worldly and Christian fellowship; that it is the church's mission to destroy worldly society as much as idolatry, since both are equally hostile to the cause of Christ."

"According to this theory, then, Christians would have to give up the card-party, the dance, the theatre, and the wine-dinner," said Mr. Blalock, thoughtfully.

"My dear Father, what is it for a redeemed soul to give up such things? Can a Christian, indulging in such amusements, exert any really wholesome influence? Now, Father, won't you and mother," asked Maud in a low, pleading voice, looking at each in turn, "accept Christ's ideas of society, and help me to shun in the future all injurious associations, while we all endeavor to make our home in every sense Christian?"

Mr. Blalock remained silent some moments, for he was confused. He claimed to be a Christian; hence, Maud's request to make the home Christian, presented to his mind a self-evident proposition; yet, it involved so much. He thought to himself, Why should not a Christian be a Chris-

tian? Maud, discovering her parent's embarrassment, quietly arose, and taking a seat in his lap, tenderly threw her arms around his neck, and passionately sobbed..

Mr. Blalock, looking into the beautiful face of his daughter, down whose crimson cheeks the hot tears coursed, said brokenly, with an attempt at pleasantry, "Maud, since you have become an apostle of reform, I do hereby give and bequeath to you the liberty to make our home in every sense Christian, according to your conception of the will of Christ. You may bring into it whatever will prove helpful, or remove from it whatever is objectionable—though it be your mother and myself."

Maud took her father at his word, and at once began her reformatory measures. Breakfast over, she laid a Bible at Mr. Blalock's plate, saying, "Father, let our first step be to erect the family altar, and ask the blessing of God upon our home."

He held the Bible in his hand in evident confusion and surprise. He had never offered prayer in his home, and naturally was awkward in making a beginning. After reading the twenty-third Psalm, Mr. Blalock led his family in a brief, yet earnest petition to the throne of grace. Maud showed her appreciation by again embracing her father.

The next care of this consecrated girl was, with glad heart, to purify the social atmosphere of her home. She went into the library, closely investigating the moral bearing of each object therein. Over the mantel hung an oil painting of Washington at a ball, highly valued, not only because of its excellence as a work of art, its historic associations, and its great age, but especially because it had long been an heirloom in the Blalock family. By virtuosos, this masterpiece had been placed at five thousand dollars. Maud stood before the splendid painting, gazing intently at it with mingled emotions. Her father esteemed it beyond price; the library furnishings would suffer from its loss; and yet, when she once entertained a strong misgiving as to the propriety of the dance, it was this stately picture that decided her in favor of that amusement. She reasoned that if Washington and Lady Washington, together with the most honored and distinguished characters in American history, engaged in dancing, it could not be wrong for her to follow their example. As she realized the influence of the merry scene upon her life, her conscience burning with a sense of shame, she exclaimed, "Away! ye wicked great who,

"In this masquerade of mirth and love,
Mistook the bliss of heaven for bacchanals above."

Then, leaving the frame to adorn a design that should point a better moral, she put the painting in the grate, ignited a match, and smiled as George and Lady Washington with the entire host of revelers went dancing up the chimney in a stream of smoke. She next added to the fuel a Ladies' Magazine which had on its cover the nude bust of a woman, and a popular Monthly which advertised a certain brand of whiskey; also a paper that issued a sensational Sunday edition.

Now came the battle of the books. Mr. Blalock had always been prompt to supply the library with the latest publications, and unfortunately he was not careful, at times, to weigh their merits. Not infrequently specimens of the world's most insinuating and corrupting thought crept into his shelves. Covert attacks upon the Bible and the Christian religion were sheltered in this home of professed believers. "Shame!" cried Maud, as she overhauled her father's tomes; and in her righteous indignation, she required each author to give account of the deeds done in his book at her judgment-bar. First she condemned and consigned to the fire volume after volume of crazy jargon and vicious plots, as well as all sensational and unchaste stories claiming to be religious, such as Hall Caine's immoral rubbish called "The Christian," and Marie Corelli's unsavory travesty, "The Master Christian."

In her holy zeal, Maud did not spare her father's meerschaum pipe and tobacco-box; and with fix edness of purpose cast these contraband articles with a dozen cases of Havana cigars, into the hungry flames.

Waving her conquering banner, the young heroine of faith swept into the parlor, and removed from the cabinet all dance music and questionable operas, together with indelicate comic pieces. Nor did Wagner's far-famed "*Par sifal*" escape her iconoclastic hand, notwithstanding the classic name of its author.

On the center-table there were two articles highly prized by her parents. Mr. Blalock laid special stress on the album, embossed with silver, while Mrs. Blalock regarded the stereoscope as her peculiar treasure. The album contained a hundred photographs of noted actors and actresses in the immodest costumes of the stage. Her father had taken great pains and incurred no small expense in making this collection, representing as it did, the theatrical celebrities of Europe and America. Having stripped the album of its players, Maud dropped them into the waste-basket; and she could not repress a smile when she recognized the redoubtable Sarah Bernhardt seemingly standing on her head amid the debris of stars. Then she began to pass her mother's views through the 'scope, removing all objection-

able scenes, such as a series of pictures representing a married couple in the several stages of undress. After this, peering into every nook and corner of the spacious parlor for some offensive object, she spied the handsome phonograph, which had given so much diversion to the family and its visitors. But there were some records that were not in keeping with Christian dignity, as for instance, "Little Brown Jug." These, with the rest of her plunder, were deposited in the grate as an offering to the god of fire.

Passing into the hall, the Christian girl confronted the large statue of Venus, which was universally pronounced a superb work of art. It cost fifteen hundred dollars, and its right to occupy the most prominent place in the mansion had never been questioned. The bust was nude and revolting. Maud paused before this divinity of voluptuousness, and involuntarily covered her eyes with her hands, wondering how such a loathsome object could have ever found its way into a professedly religious household. She felt the blood tingling in her cheeks. Her pulse quickened. Her frame shuddered. Her eyes filled with great sad tears of shame. Why, thought she, had she never raised her voice against the introduction of this base ideal of art? Why had her mother, an avowed disciple of Jesus, tolerated this gross indignity offered to all womanhood?

At length, waiving the questionings that were flitting through her mind, she ordered a servant to go out upon the street and engage six men, while she decided what disposition to make of the ill-famed goddess. She remembered that there was an old well in a back corner of the lot, which her father was having filled from time to time as rubbish accumulated. Here she found a fitting sepulchre for Aphrodite. Leading the men as they strained under the marble deity, in solemn procession to the well, she directed them to drop their burden. When she heard the thud and crash on the stones below, she exclaimed, "Thy Kingdom come!"

Maud concluded her reformatory labors, when, with triumphant and ruthless step, she entered the wine-cellar, and commanded the servant to take thence a number of crates and baskets filled with choicest liquors, of both domestic and imported brands. These wines had attracted bibulous connoisseurs to the Blalock home, and, in more than one instance, had paved the way to ruin by creating a desire for strong drink. As Maud recalled several cases of intoxication that grew out of her father's wine-suppers, moved by a holy enthusiasm, she had the liquors poured into the kitchen sink, and thus closed the reign of Bacchus in her home.

When Mr. Blalock came to dinner and saw

what Maud had done, he was completely bewildered. He sat down in his arm-chair and seemed to be dreaming. His first impulse was to be angry, but he loved his daughter with peculiar affection, and he could not be angry, no matter how grieved he might be. After all, was she right? Was John Ernest right? Was this Christianity? He called her to him, but said nothing. He clasped her to his bosom and kissed her tenderly. He realized, for the first time in his life, the meaning of Christianity and the mission of Jesus to the world.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MAUD TRUE TO HER CONVICTIONS.

Dear Maud:—Your note, recalling the invitation to the progressive-euchre party, has been received. I must confess I feel both pain and surprise at the explanation you give,— pain, because I had anticipated meeting you socially again;—surprise, because your manner, once so cordial, seems to have undergone an unexpected change, and to indicate a degree of coldness which I hoped could never exist. In view of your generous nature, I have tried to think that I am mistaken; yet my misgivings are the more confirmed by your abrupt departure from the ball-room a few evenings since; and especially by your brief sentence at the close of the waltz—Do you remember?—“How vapid society is!” This sentiment I have not been able to understand; for you are so bright an ornament of the fashionable circle, that such a declaration would appear impossible to you.

I write this soft impeachment on the ground that I have presumed to feel an interest in you, the extent of which I shall not name, for fear of meriting your just displeasure; yet, if I may accommodate a verse from Shakespeare, “There’s more in heaven and earth—and also in some smaller spheres—than your philosophy has dreamed of.”

With a view to a better understanding, will you accord me the coveted privilege of visiting you in the near future?

With sincere admiration, yours
EDWARD PRESTON.

Dear Edward :—In reply to yours of the present date, it may not be amiss for me to acknowledge that my explanation was indeed too meagre; but you will make some allowance for this oversight when it is stated that the number of invitations canceled exceeded fifty. I shall, therefore, express myself more fully now.

I am free to say that my views of fashionable society have, indeed, essentially changed of late. Impressions have been growing upon me, almost unconsciously, for some weeks, due to our pastor's sermons on the relation of the church to social conditions. The full force of his teaching, however, did not break upon me till the evening of the College ball. I then realized, as I never had, the utter insecurity of the social fabric, and the empty trend of worldly amusements. Hence, I have discarded the dance, the theatre, the wine-dinner, and the card-party from my recreations and enjoyments. I have taken this step from the conviction that such amusements are out of accord with the Christian life; and since taking it, I have been happier than ever before. The disclosure may appear strange to you, but I find now my highest joy and most charming amusements in religion. My time, my talent, if I have any, and my heart are all given without reservation, to the service of our Saviour. I have

broken with the world, and am dead to its pleasures, except so far as they may be innocently reproduced in the sphere of faith. It follows, that I have withdrawn from what is commonly known as fashionable society. I relinquish it, however, without the slightest asceticism, just as a heathen, when enlightened, abandons his false religion for the true. This simile is not intended as either a reproach or a reflection aimed at my friends, but only as an illustration of my conduct.

I shall esteem it a pleasure to have you call.

In sincerity, yours,

MAUD BLALOCK.

On Thursday afternoon Edward Preston called at the mansion of the Blalocks. He could but notice the many alterations in the furnishings of the parlor which had been made since his last visit. He observed the re-arrangement of the center-table and the difference in the selections of music on the stand. He noted particularly the disappearance of an exquisite pastel of a nude Cupid from the mantel. The entire atmosphere of the room was changed—more wholesome, more bracing. He scanned the surroundings in vain to discover any object that did not foster noble purpose, teach a helpful lesson, or stimulate the mind and heart to sound action. All this seemed unutterably strange to young Preston, and yet he was conscious of an awakening, produced, he knew not how.

Maud's greeting was cordial; she had known Edward from childhood. He was bright, entertaining, and conspicuously a gentleman. In their earlier years, they had attended the same schools, contested for the same prizes, and in social position, were equally matched. Both were members of Grand Avenue Church, and both were wealthy.

After the usual exchange of preliminary remarks, Edward frankly said, "Maud, it grieves me to think that there has sprung up between us even the minutest estrangement. Be candid enough to tell me whether it is in my power to effect a complete reconciliation."

"I would rather answer by making an explanation;" said Maud. "You are not responsible for any estrangement that may have arisen; the change has taken place in me. My views of life, my conceptions of duty, my aspirations, have all altered recently. My former life became distasteful to me; I became ashamed of my indifference to better things; and in the light of Jesus' teachings, I resolved to live as I think a Christian ought to live. This required a change in my relations to society; and these altered relations explain not so much 'estrangements' as differences; in other words, I move in a different sphere from that of the past."

"Maud," said Preston, becoming more familiar as well as more earnest, "I admire your fidelity

to principle; and did all Christians take your stand, the world probably, and the church certainly, would be much better. I grew up to think the customs of society are right; and never seriously doubted their propriety, seeing that Christians sustained them. Your action has caused me to think and to inquire. It all seems strange to me, because Mr. Ernest's Christian society idea is entirely new in Woodville. I discover that the best people accept it. For my own part, I am willing to be instructed; and am even desirous of knowing my full duty. I heard the pastor's sermons on the subject, and have seen his views illustrated in the noble lives of Miss Howard and Dr. Foster, and many others, but most conspicuously in yourself."

"Thanks!" said Maud; but there must be no flattery, Edward. I am but an awkward beginner, and need help myself."

"I only wish I could render but the smallest assistance;" said young Preston earnestly.

"You can render important service," said Maud, blushing.

"How?" inquired Edward softly, with undisguised interest.

"By being yourself a true Christian." And there was a pause.

At length Edward spoke: "Maud, I have desired, above all things, to be a true Christian,

and thus to make the most of myself; but until Mr. Ernest came to our church, the specimens of Christianity that we saw on every hand, were not inspiring. But I now promise my Saviour, with you as witness, that I will devote myself to his service, subordinating pleasure to duty, and the world to the church."

Maud answered by glowing cheeks and a gracious smile.

Edward Preston took her hand, saying, "Maud, I have loved you from the childish hours when we walked together from school, when I fought every boy that teased you, when I carried your books and lifted you over the snow-drifts. That love has ripened now, and life without you would seem an awful desolation. Will you brighten and gladden my home in years to come by your presence and your love?"

If actions speak louder than words, silence often speaks louder than either. Maud hesitated. She had long entertained sincere friendship for young Preston, and such friendship as might early ripen into a deeper affection. She saw in him many excellent traits of character. He was easily the peer of any young man in the city in what the world calls honor. The one quality that she feared was lacking was a high type of spirituality. She had not clearly distinguished in him the exalted purpose of the ideal believer. So, at

length, she broke the spell of silence.

"Edward, we have, as you just remarked, grown up together, and have always been friends, and I shall ever esteem it an honor to be a friend, assuring you of my great regard for the excellencies of your character—but, as I view it now, we can be only friends."

A cloud came over Preston's bright face. He had felt sure of Maud Blalock's love—but then, her new ideas! She has imbibed, he thought, religious views that separate hearts that but for them would be one. In his mental agony he realized that he no longer understood the sweetheart of a dozen happy years—she had grown away from him!

"Maud," said Preston, in a tone of evident disappointment and pain, "tell me frankly why you have broken my heart?"

"Surely I have had no such intention, Edward."

"Maud, I want to ask a single pointed question. Keep nothing back, but tell me all. Why will you not marry me?"

"Edward, it is simply because of the divergencies of our conceptions of Christ's sovereignty over our lives. I have mistrusted your realization of the glory of your high calling. I could not give my heart to any man who did not make the service of our Redeemer supreme."

"Maud, I am sure you do me an injustice. I

think I am sincere in my profession of faith in him, and in my allegiance to his cause. And it is my desire to grow in grace and usefulness."

"Yes, Edward, but it has occurred to me that you have not made Christ the *Master* of your life; that you have not put the church first in your affections, but have subordinated it to numerous orders and lodges, whose influence is hostile to a pure Christianity."

"Why, Maud, you don't think the fraternities are wrong?"

"Indeed I do. They are at least narrow. I cannot imagine the noblest type of Christians as belonging to them. Mr. Ernest says the home and the church are the only social organizations a man needs. It seems to be the tendency of the societies to lower the tone of religious character, or else to destroy it altogether."

"Do you recall a prominent instance of such baneful influence in Woodville?"

"I regret to say I do. The club has weaned my father from his church, and alienated him from my mother. Oh! I detest a club, and would never marry a club-man!" And there was fixed resolve in her tone.

Preston knew this to be true, and felt the keen force of Maud's indictment. He recalled also other cases of men whose homes had been injured or ruined by fraternal organizations. As

he vividly called to mind the gambling-dens and drinking-places, with all their frightful orgies, connected with many of the fraternities, he discerned a just cause for any woman's not wanting to marry a devotee of the club.

"Maud," said Edward at length, "I admit the perfect justice of what you have stated. But inasmuch as no minister in the city, with the exception of Mr. Ernest, has ever dared attack secret organizations, our young men have never questioned the propriety of uniting with them, particularly when they saw that the most influential citizens were members. My connection with the orders has been brief. I never once thought of their indirect antagonism to the church and the home, nor of the possible harm they work to Christian character, though I have now become satisfied that they are not conducive to spiritual growth. And Maud," taking her hand and pressing it, and lowering his voice, "for you, it would not be difficult to give up ten thousand orders, and though I were wedded to them, I'd rather be wedded to you. If, moreover, there are no obstacles besides these, they shall be at once and forever removed.

"Now, Maud, my own dearest Maud, again I pledge you my heart, whose love to you will ever be second only to that I bear my God."

A sweet light crept into Maud Blalock's face,
and she plighted her troth to Edward Preston.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A QUESTION OF CLUBS.

The next evening at tea, Maud asked her father whether he were not going to the prayer-meeting that night. Mr. Blalock did not answer at once, appearing somewhat confused, and not a little troubled. After an awkward hesitation he replied, "My daughter, I have been making a number of improvements in the last few days, and among them, family worship. Don't you think that is prayer enough for the present?"

"Father," answered Maud with great reverence and glowing enthusiasm, "don't you think we lose a great deal by not meeting with our fellow-Christians in the mid-week service? And, you know, you haven't been for some months now. I am anxious for you to go with me to-night, for I find it a hard struggle to live up to the standard the Saviour has set us. I feel so very weak."

"Maud, I am sorry I cannot accompany you this evening; but, you know, it is club night, and we are to receive members; it is a very important meeting and I feel that I have to be present."

"O Father, can you compare a club-meeting with a prayer-meeting? Our church is to receive members also to-night, six hopeful young converts from Corinne's 'infant mob,' as she calls it—and two men who have been noted drunkards in Woodville; don't you think these are the members you should welcome and encourage?"

Mr. Blalock found it quite difficult to answer his daughter's logic, as any man finds it hard to defend a bad cause. He seemed to be irritated, and betrayed his usual even temper by saying, "I go to the club for other reasons." Then, Mrs. Blalock, knowing only too well the reasons, left the table.

"Father," said Maud in a sad, but tender voice, "some days since, you gave me permission to make reforms in our home extending even to you and mother. You have seen the elevating tone of the changes that have been made in the house; now will you let me suggest some changes that I think should be made in the inmates of the home?"

"My daughter, you can say anything you please, only I have but a few moments before I must be off."

"Father," asked Maud, looking directly at her parent, "won't you give up the club?"

A peal of thunder in a clear sky would not have been more unexpected than this question. A

frown mantled his brow; the muscles of his lips contracted; and he showed signs of disapproval and impatience—which he rarely displayed in the presence of his daughter.

“Why do you object to the club?” he inquired somewhat petulantly.

“Father, must I tell you?”

“Yes, Maud; for I don’t think you should interfere in such things without having the very best of reasons.”

“My reasons, then, are these,” said Maud calmly: “I have observed that members of clubs, lodges, and orders, make poor members of churches; they subordinate a divine institution to a worldly; they are punctual at the club, and irregular at church; they cultivate the fraternity of the club and disregard the brotherhood of the sanctuary. But Father, may be, I am making myself disagreeable; must I go on?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Blalock; “let me hear you through.”

“The club is one of the worst enemies Christianity has. Did you ever observe that not a single earnest worker in Grand Avenue Church belongs to a club or any such organization?” Mr. Blalock winced. “The members of our church who have been prominent in the various Woodville societies, have been men like Mason Saunders, Mr. Stuart, and Dr. Arlington, whose Christian-

ity no one accepts. Club-men do not commonly attend Sunday services, and almost never the prayer-meeting; while, because of their habits and associations, they are a hindrance rather than a help to the pastor. Then, Father, the club is the blight of the home, the mildew of the domestic relations, and sometimes, as you know, the death of love."

Mr. Blalock's fingers twitched, the grooves on his brow grew deeper, and his eyes snapped. His daughter had laid bare his inner life—she had proved the prophetess of his heart. He knew full well that his own home-ties had been strained; and further, that his marriage vows had been shattered, by fondness for the club. Mrs. Blalock had suffered agonies for years because her husband's time and care seemed to be wholly given to his fraternity. He had once devotedly loved her—and she was worthy of the affection of any true man—but since joining the club, he had been growing more and more indifferent, and finally had been won both from his home and his church.

Maud, perceiving her father's profound agitation, arose, and then knelt down by his side, placing her head upon his bosom. "Father," said she sobbing, "will you give up the club, and love mother again?"

"Maud," stammered Mr. Blalock in broken ac-

cents, "I have given up the club forever!" and there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one Christian that abandons a club. The truant husband sought at once the broken-hearted wife—and there began a new era of happiness in the Blalock home.

For the first time in many months, and indeed, in several years, the entire Blalock family attended the prayer-meeting at Grand Avenue Church. Mr. Ernest's theme was "Hindrances to the Christian Life." He spoke with unusual tenderness and power, closing his remarks with an appeal of peculiar pathos. He said: "Imagine you were standing in an open field, and a rabbit, with heart wildly beating and with wearied limbs, came leaping past you, straining every muscle to gain a distant thicket, while on his trail only a few steps behind him, was a long, lank, hungry hound, rending the air with death-yelps, gaining every moment on his almost exhausted victim. Then suppose you should say to the little creature so hotly pursued, 'Fly, little rabbit! Yonder is the thicket! The hound is gaining on you! Fly for your life!' Would it not have been a just rebuke had the rabbit said, 'Man, if you care for my safety, stop the dog; for I am doing the best I can!' In our relation to the weak and tempted, let that be our motto—'Stop the dog!' We have already stopped the dog of strong drink in Wood-

ville, and many human rabbits have been saved, we have checked the Sabbath-desecrating dog, and have enabled tired souls to find rest and refuge in the sanctuary. As a nation, we have stopped the Spanish dog from destroying Cuba and the Philippines; and by prayers and petitions we are trying to stop the Mormon dog from reaching Congress; but there is a dog not so far away, that is ravaging our flock, and destroying many feeble ones; it is the club dog. He barks nearly every night in the week, and his bark is answered by the piteous cry of wives and children in every part of the town. A furious dog is this hound of the club. He barks till late hours; he heeds not the tears or entreaties of mothers and wives; he disregards marriage vows and all sacred relations; he heeds not solemn responsibilities; he tramples upon love; he covers the domestic altar with frost; he slays virtue; and forgets God in laughter, smoke, and champagne. Men prominent in societies are figure-heads in churches; men who patronize the club, neglect the home; and I never knew an earnest church-worker who spent his nights at the lodge. In view of this fact, desiring your own highest good, I have it in mind to ask you to break your connection with clubs and all kindred organizations, on the ground that they are hostile to your best interests. A club can add nothing to a good man, while it quietly robs him

of all he should most highly prize. Its associations are in some degree always low, its tone and spirit are damaging, its entire scope is unworthy of Christians. The church furnishes a complete field of labor and pleasure, and the only proper society for a Christian. How many of you will stop the dog? The meeting is now open."

To the astonishment of all present, Mr. Bla-lock was the first to rise. He said, "I never before opened my mouth in a prayer-meeting, though I have had much to say in clubs. I suppose the reason is, that I felt more interest in an institution of men than in that of God. But, my dear pastor, I for one, have stopped the dog. I have broken connection with three clubs and two lodges since supper. The club, in my case, was not so much a yelping hound, as a sly hyena, destroying all that is sacred in life, robbing me of home domestic joy and religious comfort. I have had more peace in the last two hours than in all the fifteen years of my association with all sorts of mock fraternities. I feel like a culprit from whose chafed limbs the cruel irons have been removed. For the first time in fifteen years, I feel like a free man, just escaped from the house of bondage. The church alone shall have my service and support hereafter. I went into the orders for brotherhood and society; and I leave them, because I found neither therein. Jesus Christ was

the teacher of brotherhood and the creator of true society; I shall, therefore, give myself fully to the only institution that adequately embodies these divine conceptions; namely, the Christian Church."

These words had wondrous weight in Grand Avenue Church. Mr. Blalock was connected with almost every prominent enterprise or institution in the city, whether hosiery, bank or college. The congregation wept for joy and a score of young and middle-aged men, in quick succession, pledged themselves to withdraw from all secret orders—and among them was Edward Preston.

CHAPTER XXX.

MORAL MIRACLES.

The great tide of reform in Grand Avenue Church continued to rise higher and higher. Men were everywhere discussing questions of duty while on the very bells of the horses holiness seemed to be written. The glory of Christianity is not in its aesthetic buildings, artistic choirs, and richly endowed colleges, but in its life. A true church is clearly marked from the world, and does what worldly organizations cannot do. It is characterized by a superb dignity and moral grandeur all its own. There are some institutions that have copied several of its features, but when distinctly scanned, they are but as tapers flickering in the splendid light of the sun. The university effects vast results, but it works no miracle. Philosophy teaches, but it does not save. Society polishes, but it does not cleanse. Governments civilize and restrain, but they do not regenerate. Whenever Christ abides in a church, moral miracles testify to his presence.

Such was the trend of John Ernest's Sunday morning sermon. He said, in concluding,

"Christ's ministry always had the opposite qualities of attracting and repelling. When he preached, some said he had a devil, while others worshipped him. When dying, he put the cross between two thieves. At the Judgment, he will separate the sheep from the goats. Paul, following his Master, divided the people; so did Luther, Wesley, Spurgeon. All our churches should be divided. Our own flock needs a thorough winnowing. The lives of many are a reproach to Christianity. They are neither sober, truthful, honest, nor even chaste. Not a few of the leaders of the congregation are also leaders of fashionable society, most of them as proud as Lucifer, and a number of them as sensual as pagans."

These searching words precipitated the impending crisis. Under John Ernest's preaching, the separation of elements so entirely distinct, was only a question of time.

Mason Saunders, with considerable affectation of dignity, rising in the congregation, declared that he could no longer remain in fellowship with a body of bigots, hopelessly committed to a policy of narrowness, and that his connection with Grand Avenue Church would at once and forever cease. He then walked proudly down the aisle and out of the church, followed by Mr. Stuart, the banker, and a motley crowd of wealthy prigs, club-gamesters, and frivolous devotees of fashion

and pleasure. As the malcontents marched out, in number about three hundred, God's chosen ones sprang to their feet en masse and sang with undisguised gratitude,

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

This was Grand Avenue's pentecostal hour. The unholy, formal, dead element, boastful of its money, or culture, or else glorying in its shame and hypocrisy, no longer quenched the Divine Spirit, and so breaking the harmony of the saints; but returned according to its nature, to its wallowing in the mire. Celestial light began to crown the mountains of the spiritual Zion, and glory filled the Lord's house. Brotherhood, so long broken by the jarring factions of a mixed membership, now reigned. Joy unspeakable filled all hearts, for the Bride, repentant and exultant, had at length returned to the Sovereign sway of her Lord. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, added weekly to the church those that were being saved. The very atmosphere seemed charged with vital force. Through the completed electrical circuit of a pure faith, the dynamo of heaven was accomplishing its wonders. The marvels of primitive Christianity returned. Moral miracles evidenced the presence of the Great Pastor. Old men who had beslimed the social life of Wood-

ville with their cheap infidelity, were induced by the potent influences of a purified church to believe. Moral lepers were cleansed. Devotees of numerous and nameless vices confessed their evil ways with tears and words meet for repentance. Thus was demonstrated, what so many seem to deny, that apostolical Christianity is possible even in these degenerate days of self-sufficiency, commercialism, materialism, unbelief, and spiritual apathy. It became evident, too, that a false church is as hurtful as a false god, and that nothing short of the Christianity of Christ can regenerate society.

The Grand Avenue congregation, realizing more and more the presence of the great Shepherd, and giving more earnest heed to his teaching, were following higher ideals. The man that never asks any question about his moral duties is unfitted for church-membership. Capt. Jack Phipps, under the lash of an awakened conscience, having begun to question his ways, called at the pastor's study.

"Good morning, Mr. Ernest," said Jack Phipps, conductor on a through train.

"Why, how do you do, Captain? What in the world are you doing here?"

"Well, Parson, it is just this. I stopped in at Grand Avenue Church one evening when you were speaking about the Sabbath. It was the

first time I had had a Sunday off in three months. You said that a man who worked on the Sabbath day, never stopping to think or to worship, led a purely animal existence. It angered me at first, for that was the way I spent most of my Sundays. Then, in spite of myself, I began to examine my past life, and to compare myself with the animals. I kept asking, 'What sort of a brute am I?' I worked like an ox at the bidding of a master, as much Sunday as Monday. I was valued by the railroad authorities, just as the owner values his ox, by the measure of my labor. When I got home, I found that I was an animal there too, not an ox—but a dog, tired, sleepy, nervous, snappish, caring only to get my meals and to lie down and sleep. My home was my kennel. I found but little pleasure in my family, I had no Sabbath for rest, no opportunity to attend church for instruction, and no chance to cultivate my spiritual nature. But after hearing your sermon, I said last Sunday morning, as my train was flying past Woodville, 'I'll be a dog no longer; but, by the grace of God, I'll be a man. As my train flew on, I looked back and saw Grand Avenue Church steeple pointing towards heaven. The tears came into my eyes, and something seemed to say to me, 'The church, and not the cars, is the place for a man on the Sabbath day.' When I got to the end of the run, I reported to the authorities, and

asked if I could have my Sundays at home. I was answered roughly, 'Yes, you can have all your Sundays at home, and your Mondays, too.' I knew then that I was discharged. I realized that it meant the loss of a position worth a hundred dollars per month. I walked out of the office, and looking up at the stars, felt, for the first time in my life, that I was a man. I held my head up, and my heart was light. When I reached home, my wife met me at the door; I broke out into a laugh, and told her that I had lost my job, but saved my soul.

"I tell you, Mr. Ernest, the Sabbath of the Bible is fast becoming an obsolete institution in America. There are upwards of three million persons in the United States engaged in Sunday labor, affecting fifteen million people directly, and nearly the whole population indirectly. And this is one reason you preachers reach so few of us sinners. I have been on the road for twenty-five years, and I can testify that this Sabbath desecration is destroying the poor fellows that engage in it. And the corporations that drive them like so many cattle, have no more conscience than a rock. It's a fact, sir."

Capt. Jack paused. John Ernest listened, in a brown study, to the recital of his story. His heart burned, his soul was indignant. He began to question whether our boasted civilization

is bane or blessing. After a few words of encouragement from the minister, the conductor resumed.

"Now," said he, "if you ain't ashamed of a fellow like me, once a railroad Sunday dog, but now Christ's man for seven days in the week, you can put my name down for church-membership."

"Capt. Phipps," said Ernest kindly, "you are the sort of folks we want, and I assure you, the church will cordially welcome you.

"Now, what are you going to do about another job?"

"Well, Parson, I haven't thought much about that. The main thing with me has been to determine what is right, job or no job. I have put my case into the hands of the great Advocate, believing that he will manage it for me."

The conductor was just finishing his story, so full of trust in God, when a mechanic called to see the minister.

"Pastor," began the workman, "I have lost my place in the planing-mills; but I am not disturbed about it. I just thought I would let you know that I am trying to carry out your teaching, and that I intend to keep my Sabbath whether I keep my job or not."

"What's the trouble, brother?" asked Mr. Ernest, whose sympathy was always easily aroused by the recital of wrong or distress.

"Oh, it was only a Sunday job the boss wanted me to do; and because I refused, he laid me off."

"How did it happen?" inquired the pastor, interested in whatever concerned his members.

"Well, you see, sir, the firm had a large order on hand they were anxious to finish up Saturday night, so as to begin a new one on Monday morning. So, you see, the mills were running on extra time to get the stuff ready for shipment early Monday, according to contract; otherwise the lumber would be delayed twelve, or possibly, twenty-four hours. I worked with might and main to put things in shape to close down by twelve o'clock Saturday night. I discovered, when it was nearly midnight, that the order could not be completed before two o'clock Sunday morning. So I went to the boss and told him how the matter stood. He ripped out a great oath, and said the order would have to be finished up, if it took till dinner-time Sunday to do it. Then I said, 'Boss, at twelve to-night my machine stops till Monday morning.'

"I don't suppose it will," said the boss. 'You may stop, but I'll let you know your machine won't stop.'

"I went back to my place, and worked till the town clock struck twelve; then I was about to loosen the bands and shut down, when an operative walked up and said, 'I'll take charge of this

machine.' So I left the mills with a clear conscience. Pastor, I won't be anybody's dog as long as I remember what you said about the Sabbath. No, sir; if God wants a dog, I'll be his, but not man's."

Looking upon the noble fellow with sincere admiration, Ernest uttered to himself, "Thank God!" Then he said to the mechanic, "I have been expecting something like this. Capt. Jack Phipps' is a similar case. But I have made arrangements to meet his difficulty, and shall see about yours now."

Stepping to the 'phone, he called up Ben Rolfe, president of the Hosiery. He told the circumstances, and received an answer that made the tears start in his eyes. Turning to the mechanic, he repeated Rolfe's message. "Tell him to come to the office at once. I need a foreman in one of the departments of the Hosiery."

As the grateful mechanic rose to extend his hand to the pastor, he said, "Mr. Ernest, by the help of the present Christ, there are two things I won't do; that is, work on the Sabbath, and attend a Sunday evening sacred concert."

These were, indeed, signal transformations, yet not more remarkable than many others that took place after the Lord became Pastor of the church; but perhaps, there was no greater manifestation of the Shepherd's power than the con-

version of a man, seemingly akin to beast and devil. Because of this wretch's age and late hours, he was universally known as Old Midnight.

One Sunday evening Old Midnight, to the amazement of all present, attended divine service. It was the first time in twenty-five years he had put his wayward feet in a place of worship. He never entered a church but once in his boyhood, and that was on the occasion of a Christmas-tree entertainment, when he stole a bag of apples. He had never heard a sermon, he had never read a verse in the Bible, and he did not know that Jesus had been crucified. He lived in ignorance and vice, a drunken sot, often serving a sentence in jail, or working out a term on the chain-gang. When not in custody, he walked the streets with his toes showing through his shoes, and his gray hair sticking out of the holes in his hat, and his filthy clothes patched occasionally, but ragged generally.

When Mr. Ernest asked if ony one wished to unite with the church, the veteran evil-doer went forward. Some shuddered, while others whispered, "What meaneth this?" Mr. Ernest, who knew something of the change that had taken place in the aged sinner, requested him to relate his Christian experience. The old man stood before the congregation shaking as if palsied, leaning on a crooked stick. Turning to the preacher

he said, accustomed to the phraseology of the court-house rather than to that of the church, "Please your honor, about ten days ago, a constable (meaning a deacon) come up to me, an' says he to me, 'Midnight, ain't you tired of sinnin'?'"

"I'm tired of bein' hungry," says I.

"But sin is wus 'n hunger," says he. "Don't you want to be saved?"

"I dunno," says I. "What does you mean by bein' saved?"

"Trustin' in Jesus, an' gittin' help from him," says he.

"Who is Jesus? Seems like I once hearn tell of him."

Then says he, "Jesus is God's Son, an' died long ago to save bad people, an' all of us is bad." Then he read from a book about Jesus, how he come to seek an' to save them what wuz los'. I never had words to take holt on me like them words. At fust I could n't b'lieve 'em. But then it looked like an' onseen hand gripped me. The man looked me straight in the face, and says he, "Midnight, stop you' evil-doin's an' be a man. Stan' up as if you wuz somebody." I says, "Man, I'se jest looking fur a chance to steal some vitals now. How kin I quit my evil ways when nobody will give a man like me a job; an' you know I mus' have bread."

Says he to me, in a kinder pleasant voice,
"Call at my shop in the mornin', an' I'll give you
a job."

"I resolved right then to lead a better life. The next day I went to work in the carpenter's shop, with a chisel in my hand, tryin' to earn a livin'. The chisel turned to a serpent. I saw its eyes gazin' into mine. I knowed it wuz only my brain reelin' an' er rockin', an' it was a sorter dry delirium. I knowed what I wanted wuz liquor; an' the hair on my crown stood on eend, my eyes popped well nigh out of my head, an' the sweat in great drops broke out all over my body. The serpent fell from my hand, an' like a thing of life, looked up out of the shavin's an' shot its tongue into my face. Then I give way, an' says to myself, 'I can't stan' it; I mus' have a drink. Give me a drink!' Just then, the same good man stepped to my side, an' said, "Midnight, old fellow, I know you is havin' a hard fight, an' I've come to say, stan' up like a man, an' don't surrender. Be brave, old boy, an' it will come out all right. I have the best wife in the land, an' she tole me to tell you that she had hot coffee an' nice bread, an' if you will come home with me, she will sing an' play for you. Strike the serpent, an' come on." I put my hand to my cold, clammy brow, an' says I, 'I'll be a Christian. God

helpin' me.' An' here I is, to jine this church, if you will have me."

Thus Grand Avenue Church, like every true church, was busy working moral miracles.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BLACK AB.

On a dark, narrow alley in Purgatory, there stood a hut, consisting of two apartments, separated by "curtains" made of refuse matting taken from the ash-barrels of the town. The inmates of this "home" where an old Irish woman, a negro lad of twelve years, and four dogs. So numerous were the oddities, and so fantastic the ways, of the eldest member of the family, that she was known in the alley as "the witch." One of the strangest of the witch's idiosyncrasies was her intense aversion to cats. So great, indeed, was her antipathy to the feline tribe, and so peculiar were the effects exerted upon her by their presence, that she was the subject of a disease rather than of a caprice. That eccentric malady sometimes manifested itself in serious, though amusing ways. She seemed to possess a sort of special sense, now recognized by both the sciences of psychology and medicine, by virtue of which she could detect the presence of a cat with as infallible accuracy as a subject of hay-fever is conscious of harvest.

Since it was unbearable torture to have a tabby in the room with her, the witch seldom spent a night from home for fear of a catastrophe. If she chanced at a neighbor's, her first inquiry on reaching the gate was sure to be, "Do you keep a cat?" In the event that the proscribed animal was found on the premises, it had to be imprisoned in a box and lodged in an outhouse during her visit. On one occasion, when the witch was taking tea at the house of a back-alley acquaintance, the hostess believing this consciousness of cats to be but a whim of her venerable guest's, suffered Sir Thomas to be released from his confinement and quietly and unobserved to take his accustomed place under the table. At once, as if moved by electricity, the witch threw up her hands, turned pale, and screamed in paroxysms of nervous agony.

As a protection against cats, she had persuaded her husband, a short time before his death, to introduce on the lot a number of hounds, which were allowed to sleep in the hut with the family.

After the death of her consort, the witch, fancying that his soul had entered into one of the hounds, and not knowing which, would never consent to have a dog killed or given away, for fear of dishonoring the dead. To a negro boy, named Black Ab, was entrusted the charge of this exact-

ing branch of the family. He was required to treat his wards as if they were human, feed them from plates, comb their heads, wash their faces, and prepare each a bed; for it would never do for her departed husband to sleep on a door-mat! The venerable shade gave her canines, in one of which was the spirit of her departed lord, dessert twice a week, while on Sunday she tied scarlet cravats around their necks, and read Hostetter's Almanac to them.

Such is the story the people of Purgatory never tire of telling. We are concerned with this tale only so far as it introduces to us the character of Black Ab.

After the death of the witch, the sable lad, fatherless, motherless, homeless, applied one day, hungry and dispirited, at Corinne's Training School for a position as errand-boy.

"Is dis Miss Crin How'd?"

"Yes; and what is you name?"

"Dey calls me Black Ab."

"Oh, yes; and sometimes they call you 'the minstrel of the alley', don't they?"

"Sump'n like dat 'm. But I got to move 'way fum de alley now." And the boy sighed.

"Why, what's the matter, Black Ab?"

"Habn't you hearn how dat de witch done dead?"

"Yes, I have heard of it. What are you going

to do now?"

"Doan nome; dat's jes what I done come fur to see 'bout."

There was an honest look in the boy's eyes, and a degree of intelligence in his face that would attract attention anywhere. And as Corinne scanned his striking features, she could but wonder why some wealthy family in Woodville had not secured his services.

"What sort of work have you been doing, Black Ab?"

"Been wait'n on dogs, 'm."

"What else can you do?"

"I kin cut wood, an' tote coal, an' sweep de yard, an' run down de street, an' do 'mos' anything dey wants me to do."

Calling to mind the little African's reputation as an alley songster, Corinne asked, "Can you sing, Black Ab?"

"Yes'm."

The young minstrel sang a negro love-ditty, so clear, so well sustained, and with such marvelous compass of voice, that the children left their desks, threw their spellers on the floor, and rushed pell-mell to the front, while teamsters stopped their wagons and carts, and gentlemen of means, and ladies of culture paused to hear Woodville's richest melody. When the song closed, there was rapturous applause, and a number of coins were thrown to the little darky.



Black Ab.



"What a master of song!" thought Corinne. "If only this rare gift could be made to do service for our Christ!"

Black Ab was employed in the Training School. His first errand was to the hardware store for some panes of glass needed for repairs. His route led him through the "black district" where he came upon a score of little Africans playing marbles. Their leader was one Racket, a copper-skin, about Black Ab's age, and a little his superior in size. Racket was the bully of the district, pranky, daring, tyrannical. Since the other boys were afraid of him, they accorded him the honors due a young prince. As soon as Black Ab came in sight, Racket determined to domineer over him, and began at once to pick a quarrel.

"You'se de blackes' nigger I ever see," muttered Racket angrily as the errand-boy approached, at the same time swelling himself out like a young bullock preparing for hostilities.

"I had ruther be black dan er yaller ape," replied Black Ab pluckily.

All the sable urchins, with the whites of their eyes conspicuous, gathered around the combatants; for nothing was of so much importance to a tribe of negro lads as a first-class fisticuff. Rolling their eyes and putting their hands into their pockets, they gazed upon the antagonists with untold admiration. But it was all the while amazing

to them that any boy should dare dispute the field with the champion of the neighborhood, who as yet had never been whipped.

"No strange nigger gwine ter pass th'ough dese here primuses, 'cep'n he gits on his knees an' axes my pardon fust. An' ef he doan do dat, he gwine to get er brushin'," ejaculated the bully.

"An' ef you doan shet up you fly-trap, I'se gwine ter baptize you wid er lickin'," gravely retorted the alley minstrel.

On hearing these bold words, Racket threw down the gauntlet for immediate battle. Now it was a custom among the blacks for the challenging party to put a chip upon his head, turn round three times, and dare the other side to knock it off. Not to displace the chip was cowardice; to knock it off was a fight. So, as the bully turned with the chip balanced on his head, he gave the haughty challenge, which Black Ab accepted by sending the wooden symbol whizzing through the air. A fierce struggle ensued. Inasmuch as the contestants were nearly equally matched, the fight was long and severe. Black Ab succeeded finally, however, in inflicting a blow on Racket's temple that felled him to the ground. Following up this master-stroke, he placed his knees on the bully's arms, butting him in the face so furiously that the copper-skin threw up the sponge, and in yells of agony yielded the palm.

One of the spectators, eyeing the victor with unmeasured wonder, voiced the sentiment of his fellows, exclaiming, "Gemmens, dat's er nigger fum back yonder!"

When Black Ab returned, Corinne, observing his battered appearance, and suspecting something had gone wrong down the street, began to investigate the conduct of her minstrel, as the circumstances seemed to justify.

"Miss Crin," stammered the lad, rolling nervously the whites of his eyes, "clar gracious I ain't done nothin' 'cept lick dat sassy yaller nigger what dey calls Racket."

"And you got into a street fight, then?"

"Yes'm; jes er scrimmage, es yer mought say. An' fudderomo, Miss Crin, dat yaller nigger tacted me in de broad daylight, an' I had ter offend myse'f."

Corinne, knowing the bad character of Racket, felt that Black Ab was justified; still, she took advantage of the occasion to deliver a lecture on peace and prudence.

The little negro became a general favorite in the Training School, discharging his several duties faithfully, and receiving private instruction from the best of teachers. He was especially quick to imbibe religious truth and the hymns. It was not long before he gave his heart to the Saviour and became a shining light.

With one great object in view, Corinne impressed upon Black Ab's mind the religious needs of Africa, and had him carefully trained in all departments of sacred music. She purchased, moreover, two excellent instruments for him, a guitar and a mandolin, in order that he might be able to furnish his own accompaniments. These pieces he mastered as by intuition.

One afternoon Corinne Howard called at the Blalocks', and unceremoniously ran up stairs without waiting for an invitation. She found Maud in her room planning to enlarge her work.

"Maud," said she, "I shall close my labor with the 'Infant Mob' next week; and I have come to ask you to take it. It has been not only a joy, but a priceless blessing to me. I believe the finger of the Master has pointed me to you as my successor.

"O Corinne Howard! I am utterly incapable of such a task—and then, why do you give up the work, pray?"

"Because I shall leave Woodville in a few weeks. I am sure, Maud, you are not only fitted for taking the work, but also for carrying it on to yet greater success."

"I shall, then, try to do my best; but dear, dear Corinne, why do you leave Woodville?"

"Because I wish to do mission work in the valley of the Congo."

Maud clasped Corinne in her arms, and burst into passionate weeping. Many things came to her mind, and among them, the question, "What about Dr. Foster?" They had long been lovers. So, after a protracted pause, Maud ventured to ask, "Will *he* go with you?"

"Yes—Black Ab," answered Corinne.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FINEST OF THE WHEAT.

The cause of missions lay heavy on John Ernest's heart. He had faithfully proclaimed the church's duty to the foreign work, but was pained to see that his flock answered in contributions rather than in missionaries. The pastor knew full well that no church can do the will of Christ without prosecuting the work abroad; and, moreover, that no home interest can reach its goal without active connection with the foreign field. In view of these facts, he resolved to turn the Sunday evening service into a missionary mass-meeting, hoping to arouse some of his folk to a sense of their obligation to the benighted peoples of the earth.

Mr. Ernest entered the pulpit with a burden weighing on his soul and a shadow resting on his face; for the weal of lost humanity was dearer to him than his own life. Suppose no one should respond—and he had no intimation that there would be any response—how could he endure the disappointment? He had looked for a great quickening in his congregation touching the evan-

gelization of the world as the climax of his ministry at Grand Avenue Church; yet, so far, they had given only money instead of men. He made an impassioned appeal, saying, "The foreign work is emphasized by three facts: 1. Christ's last command enjoined the evangelization of the nations. After he had risen from the dead, just on the eve of going to the Father, the Saviour of mankind said, 'Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations;' as if the salvation of the heathen were his last thought, the one supreme burden of his heart. Thus the Master left the earth with missions ringing in the ears of his disciples. 2. Christ sent his greatest apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was a foreign missionary. Jesus did not intend that we should send our poorest preachers and workers to the richest fields, but that we should offer our best. There is no work more important, and there is no reward greater, than that of the missionary; hence, we should be willing, if God calls, to give ourselves, or the brightest and loveliest of our children. 3. The foreign work bears the unmistakable impress of the Holy Spirit. The mission field has, from the beginning, developed the most Christ-like characters; such as Paul, Carey, Judson, David Livingstone, David Brainerd, and hundreds of others, though less noted, yet of like spirit and purpose."

Then the preacher, with face blazing with enthusiasm, asked, "Is there not one out of all this vast audience that will volunteer for the foreign field? Is there not one that will bear the Saviour's message of life to the perishing? Think, dear soul, think! You owe your every hope of heaven to Jesus. Then, will you not show your gratitude by telling the lost millions the story of his love? Will you see them die while you have the knowledge that will save them? Could you enjoy heaven, when you had refused to help your fellow-kind to reach it? Be silent a moment. Is not the Redeemer pleading with you? Listen well—he speaks—will you go?"

The preacher uttered these words as if he were pleading for a man's life; and indeed he was; yea, for many lives. The great congregation was hushed into breathless silence. The very pulses of the people seemed to cease their throbbing; and, as many who were present said afterwards, with a little clearer spiritual vision, the audience might have seen the Spirit of God brooding over it.

Mr. Ernest called for a voluntary prayer.

Dr. Foster responded, tenderly beseeching the gracious Father to awaken in each believer interest in missions. He prayed that all hearts might be touched, all minds illuminated by the Spirit of God; that each soul might hear the

divine voice speaking to it; that the entire church might become submissive to the will of the Lord; and that all obstacles to the advance of the kingdom might be removed. Then he closed the prayer with a few earnest petitions that seemed to rise like successive billows of the sea, and beat with celestial melody against the throne. "O thou Redeemer of men, look in pity upon dead heathenism. In thy infinite power and love, liberate mankind from the chains of superstition and the bondage of idolatry. Claim the nations for thine own, and fill the earth with thy glory. Gracious God, let none of us stand in the way of thy Kingdom's coming. Inasmuch as thy favor is better than life, forbid that any of us should refuse to serve thee in whatsoever part of the earth thou dost open to us a door. Let no sordid consideration, no desire of gain, or love of ease, no ambition, keep us from hearing and obeying thy voice, if thou condescend to use us in the foreign field. Now, Lord God, take us, take our loved ones, take the finest of the wheat; and ours will be the joy, and thine the glory, through Jesus, thy Son and our Saviour. Amen."

John Ernest remained on his knees some moments; then rising, and turning to the congregation, said with peculiar pathos, "Has the Lord of the vineyard one here whom he has set apart

for work among the heathen? If so, will you please rise at your seat?"

Corinne Howard arose.

Dr. Foster started as he saw her. He was as pale as death—his prayer was answered—the Lord had taken "the finest of the wheat;" had chosen the woman he loved. Was he really willing to abide by his own prayer? Was he willing to give up Corinne for the sake of Jesus?—And there was a raging fire, a darkening chaos, a tragic struggle in the heart of the beloved physician.

There was another that stood, but unobserved, till a low voice from the gallery inquired, "Ain't you seed me, Mist' Ernest?"

The minister looked up, and there was Black Ab standing, and rolling the whites of his eyes.

"What is it, Black Ab?" said Ernest kindly.

"I'se gwine fur to go es er mishnery wid Miss Crin."

As all eyes turned towards the little darky, there was a universal titter.

"Do you feel that the Lord has called you Black Ab?"

"How come de Lo'd ain't called me, Mist' Ernest? Ain't I hearn Miss Crin say how de Lo'd needs different sort of folks to do his wo'k; some to preach, an' some to pray, an' some to nus, an' some to docter, an' some to teach, an' some to sing, an' de like er dat?"

"What do you think a boy like you could do, Black Ab?"

"Ax Miss Crin what I kin do. I kin wait on her, an' I kin tell de folks dat what dey needs is er Saver, 'cause he done saved me. An' den, I speck I kin sing in de meetin's. Dat, sah, is what I kin do." And his lips quivered, and his eyes filled with tears.

Ever quick to recognize the Lord's hand, Mr. Ernest remarked, "I think I see the wisdom of divine providence in bringing this lad under the influences of the Training School, where he became impressed with the missionary idea. In attracting and holding the restless pagan multitudes by means of his splendid musical gifts, he will prove invaluable to Miss Howard. The heathen will listen to a song when all else fails to interest them. I trust the calling of this boy indicates our heavenly Father's purpose to use the colored people to help evangelize their own race in Africa."

As soon as Mr. Ernest ceased speaking, there were enthusiastic cries all over the church for a solo from Black Ab. The little negro seemed affrighted, until Corinne beckoned to him, and led the way to the rostrum. He faced the audience, rolled the whites of his eyes a few times as if confused, then sang:

"Fum Greenlum's icy mountains,
 Fum Injia's colored stran's,
Whar Afka's sunny fountains
 Roll down deir golden san's;
Fum many er ancient riber,
 Fum many er palmy plains,
Dey calls us to deliber
 Deir lan' fum urrer's chains."

Amid death-like stillness, and with original variations, Black Ab sang the classic hymn through. Never had it been so rendered in Grand Avenue Church. Woodville's choicest octets and chorus choirs had charmed the congregation, and European prima donnas had created their sensations in rendering this old standard, but never had that fashionable audience been so completely captured by a singer, nor had the spell of sacred song ever been so potent. When the last words fell from those childish lips, the vast concourse of hearers was bending forward to catch each perfect note. Then, as with a single impulse, fashionable ladies, under the blaze of diamonds, and men worth their millions, pressed to the front to grasp the hand of the alley minstrel.

The great attraction of the evening, however, was not the musical prodigy, but Corinne Howard herself, the leading missionary spirit of the flock. The members gathered round her with mingled

tears and smiles, extending their heartiest congratulations on her being chosen by the great Head of the Church as the worthiest of the fold.

Next evening, as Corinne was studying a large map of the Congo valley, together with the history of its people and the mission there, Dr. Foster was ushered into the cozy drawing-room. Corinne advanced, and slightly coloring, kindly greeted him.

“And here you are, Miss Corinne, really preparing to leave us! One would not have thought you could be so exquisitely cruel.” And there was a quaver in the physician’s voice.

“But, Dr. Foster, would it not be more cruel to suffer the people of the Congo to die unblest, when it may be in my power to win them to the cross?”

“Miss Corinne, I admire your sublime faith and splendid purpose; yet, I must confess that when I saw you stand last night in response to the pastor’s invitation, I shuddered. And under the dominance of my selfish nature, I was for a moment sorry.”

“Why, Dr. Foster! Sorry to see me discharge my duty to God’s fallen creatures—sorry to see me obey our Saviour’s last command? That sentiment does not become my noble self-sacrificing fellow-laborer of the past.” The beautiful girl,

remembering the “past,” blushed, and bent her head towards the floor.

“Corinne, that is my only grief—that I must be reckoned as a fellow-laborer of the *past*.” And there was a pause. “I would give the world to be a co-worker of the *future*.” And there was a longer pause. At length, Dr. Foster resumed, “When I learned your determination to devote your life to the Master’s service in the foreign field, after the first strong impulse to seek to dissuade you, I resolved to call at once and to declare what has been in my heart since the beginning of our work in Purgatory. This seems due both to me and to you. I have long admired you, and my admiration has ripened into tenderest love. Yet, while I feel that I can never ask any other woman to be my wife, I also feel that it would be selfish, and also distrustful of the divine providence, even to suggest marriage to you under conditions that would seem to conflict with your call to missionary labor. The light of my life has gone out, and the hope of my heart is dead; yet, though sick and suffering, I would rather sink into my grave than stand in the way of the Redeemer’s plan. As much as I love you, as much as my happiness depends on your love in return, I here and now surrender all that could in a material way, gladden my heart and brighten my home. I rejoice in your heroism, and shall

never cease to pray for the success of your work."

Corinne Howard, knowing that Dr. Foster loved her with the holiest passion, as her eyes met his, recognized in him the noblest of men, and the very impersonation of honor and faith. She did not try to hide from herself the fact that she cared for the man that faced her. While she duly estimated the exalted self-surrender that caused him to lay on the altar the woman he loved, she also realized the untold sacrifice she was making in rendering it impossible for her ever to be the wife of such a man.

At length she broke the silence in a sweet, low voice: "Dr. Foster, I appreciate all you have said. I have always admired your stalwart character and your Christian heroism. And I think it not unwomanly to say, that in coming to my decision, I too have had to struggle. I have fought with my own heart. The bark of my affection has been buffeted by the waves of troubled seas, amid starless nights and unpitying tempests; so the step I have taken is due solely to the fact that Christ has the first claim on my life. But it has cost me dear." And alternate pallor and crimson mantled on her cheeks.

For a moment, Dr. Foster gazed silently at Corinne, whose naturally bright and joyous face now evinced the severity of the storm that raged within. Had he never loved her before, he could

but love her now. He took her hand in his and they both knelt down together. At first he could not speak. As they lifted their disengaged hands, their moistened eyes turned upward, the lover prayed: "Our Father, we yield to thy righteous providence. We love thee supremely. Thy ways are all equal. In this trying hour make thy grace sufficient for us. Hold thou us up. Thy will, not ours, be done. Use us for thy glory, even though all our cherished hopes be shattered. Bind us, when separated by the diameter of the earth, into a loving union not to be dissolved till death us do part. And to this end, we thy servants, pledge our hearts each to the other, eschewing all other alliance while life lasts. Amen."

And Corinne, with voice full of chastened melody, repeated, "Amen."

The door-bell rang. John Ernest entered.

"Why, Dr. Foster! I have been looking for you all the evening. At last I concluded you might be here talking with Corinne over your trip to Africa. Ever since you offered that prayer last night, I have felt that you are the Lord's missionary; and I have been praising God all day."

Corinne reddened, and her face betrayed a good degree of satisfaction in what the pastor said.

With unwonted embarrassment, the physician answered, "Mr. Ernest, it will be forevermore a source of regret that I am not worthy to go my-

self abroad in the Master's service. I have often thought about my duty in this particular, but I am always discouraged by the fact that I lack the requisite qualifications."

"Nonsense!" rejoined the pastor. "I know of no one that has greater fitness for mission work. You are a skilful physician; and as such would have access to the natives as Corinne would not, or even a minister. Your adaptation to the work was amply demonstrated in Purgatory, and you have, further, received excellent instruction at the hands of Corinne. Then, Foster, don't you know that the Lord never calls to the mission field a man's sweetheart without calling the man too? Do you suppose the Master is going to suffer the earnest prayers of this girl to be thwarted just because you won't open your eyes to the providences all around you? Begin packing your trunk in the morning, and be sure to leave a plenty of space for bridal presents."

After teasing Corinne a bit, the pastor left the room with a kindly bow.

In accepting the minister's interpretation of divine providence, the lovers felt a great burden fall from them, and saw, in the flood of light that now rolled across their pathway, the ways of God, and his gracious answer to their united prayer.

Grand Avenue Church set to work at once to

arrange for a farewell service in honor of its first missionaries. At length the happy morning dawned. It was ten o'clock. The church was elaborately and beautifully decorated; festoons of evergreens, flecked with flowers, and wreaths of roses gave a very rich and bright appearance to the edifice, while the pulpit was adorned with potted plants of unusual loveliness. Above the seats which had been so punctually occupied in by-gone days by Dr. Foster and Corinne, the one on the left of the center aisle, the other on the right, were suspended crowns of large white rosebuds on a ground of blue silk. The 'infant mob' of Purgatory, no longer a mob, but a band of neatly dressed boys and girls, many of them members of Grand Avenue Church, had the place of honor in pews reserved for them in front of the pulpit.

Dr. Foster, with Corinne smiling on his arm, walked up the aisle while the wedding march sounded softly. As the sweet notes of the music died away, Mr. Ernest performed the solemn marriage ceremony with singular impressiveness, concluding the service with a prayer so simple, so beautiful, so touching, that all hearts throbbed and all eyes wept.

Dr. and Mrs. Foster left Woodville at once en route for the Congo valley. As they took the train, Black Ab followed, showing his joy at being himself a missionary by revealing his ivory teeth, and rolling, as ever, the whites of his eyes.



The Wedding March Sounded Softly.



